



SCHOOL ESPORTS RULES & GUIDELINES

[MASTER DOCUMENT]

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INTRODUCTION

KUPU WHAKATAKI

This Rulebook & Guidelines document is maintained by the NZ Esports School Sports Working Group. It outlines the mandatory rules and recommends best practices for school esports competitions in New Zealand.

RULES

NGĀ TURE

1. GAME TITLES

NGĀ TAITARA KEMU

CRITERIA

NGĀ PAEREWA

Game titles must meet the following criteria to be permitted for use in school esports competitions:

- **Ratings:** Titles must have an ESRB¹ rating of E, E10+, or T to ensure age-appropriate content. Mature-rated games are prohibited.
- **Competitive Viability:** The game must have official competitive modes or settings to facilitate tournament play.
- **Skill Development:** Games should encourage the development of strategic thinking, critical analysis, quick decision making, and other beneficial cognitive skills.
- **Teamwork:** Strong preference will be given to games that incentivize or require teamwork and collaboration.
- **Appropriateness:** Games cannot contain excessive violence, especially realistic depictions of gun violence, sexual content, or offensive material. Mild, stylized or fantasy violence may be permitted within the context of each game, but realistic simulations of weapons and combat are prohibited.
- **Accessibility:** Games should be reasonably accessible in terms of hardware requirements and cost to maximize inclusivity. Titles available on multiple platforms and those with free-to-play options are ideal.

¹ ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) are a non-profit regulatory body for the video game industry. Established in 1994 to help consumers (primarily parents) make informed choices about the games their families play. NZ Esports recognises ESRB ratings as the national standard for age classification in esports.

PRE-APPROVED TITLES²

NGĀ TAITARA KUA MANAAKITIA

Based on the above criteria, the following game titles are pre-approved³ for use in school esports competitions:

Game Name	Rating	Notes
Brawlhalla	E10+	Individual and team modes, competitive scene
Clash Royale	E	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Dragon Ball FighterZ	T	Individual and team modes, competitive scene, fantasy elements
EA FC & Similar Sports Titles	E	Promotes teamwork, competitive scene
F1 Esports Series	E	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Fortnite	T	Individual and team modes, competitive scene, cartoonish graphics
Forza Horizon (Forza Racing Championship)	E	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Mobile Legends: Bang Bang	E10+	Individual skill-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements
Hearthstone	T	Team-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements
League of Legends	T	Team-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements
Magic: The Gathering Arena	T	Individual skill-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements
Mario Kart 8 Deluxe	E	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Minecraft	E	Encourages creativity and teamwork, competitive scene
NBA 2K Series	E	Promotes teamwork, competitive scene
Overwatch	T	Team-based, competitive scene
Paladins	T	Team-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements
Pokémon Unite	E	Team-based, competitive scene
Rocket League	E	Promotes teamwork, competitive scene
Splatoon 2	E10+	Team-based, competitive scene
Street Fighter	T	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Super Smash Bros. Ultimate	E10+	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Teamfight Tactics	T	Individual skill-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements
Tekken	T	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Tetris	E	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Trackmania	E	Individual skill-based, competitive scene
Valorant	T	Team-based, competitive scene, fantasy elements

² Additional titles may be approved on a case-by-case basis by submitting a request to the NZ Esports School Sports Working Group. Approval is at the sole discretion of the Working Group.

³ Pre-approved titles do not grant publisher permission or license to operate these titles in schools. Organisers must seek independent permission from the IP owners when hosting school events.

2. TEAM ELIGIBILITY

KŌWHAI TĪMA

Teams must 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 must ensure that these exceptions do not enable the formation of super teams, and only to be granted to promote the growth of underserved schools.

3. NZ SECONDARY SCHOOL ESPORTS TIMELINE

NGĀ WĀTAKA TĀKARO HĀKINAKINA A KURA TUARUA O AOTEAROA

New Zealand Secondary Schools Esports providers must adhere to the specified timeline below to ensure a structured and standardized competitive framework:

- The annual schedule will be released in Term 4 of the preceding academic year, providing a clear outline for the entire Esports season.
- Registration for teams will open at the beginning of Term 1, Week 1, and close at the end of the last week of Term 1, allowing sufficient time for schools to organize their teams.
- The draws will be released in the first week of Term 2, with competitions commencing in the second week of Term 2.
- Competitions must conclude by the last week of Term 3, ensuring a minimum engagement period of 12 weeks, to provide a substantial competitive experience.
- Competitions will not be held during school holiday periods as published by the Ministry of Education.

4. FORMAT AND SESSION TIMES

NGĀ HŌPUTU ME NGĀ WĀ WĀTEA

New Zealand Secondary School Esports providers have the discretion to determine the most suitable format for each game title offered. However, the chosen format must allow for the completion of matches within a reasonable session time, as detailed below:

- Regular Season Play: One Hour
- Online Showdowns: Three Hours
- LAN Events: No upper limit, with a minimum break of 30 minutes between series is required. This ensures a thorough competitive experience while providing adequate rest periods for participants.

OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

NGĀ MAHI WHAI HUA

All NZSS Esports providers will implement these best practices, and 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 the predetermined timeline outlined in the NZ Esports School Sport Rules & Guidelines.

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.

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.

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.