

Procedures for Rules Opinions (Q&As)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Race Officials Committee (“ROC”) and Racing Rules Committee (“RRC”) are jointly responsible for overseeing the arrangements for rules opinions (Questions and Answers) which are issued by World Sailing (“WS”) concerning the Racing Rules of Sailing (“RRS”) and the procedures through which race officials administer the RRS.
- 1.2 The Rules Opinion Working Group (“ROWG”) must report to the ROC and RRC annually on the operation of the system, including any proposed amendments to these procedures.

2. General

- 2.1 The ROWG oversees the service provided to WS Race Officials and WS Members whereby they may submit questions to World Sailing concerning the RRS and how it is administered at events.
- 2.2 Answers to questions (“Rule Opinions”) are prepared by a panel of experienced race officials. They are not authoritative interpretations of the RRS but are the carefully considered opinion of the Panel and the ROWG.
- 2.3 Rules Opinions will be considered for Proposals for a rule change, for inclusion in the World Sailing Case Book or Call Books, or for educational material in Race Officials Manuals.
- 2.4 Previous Rules Opinions (Questions and Answers) are not updated when a new version of the Racing Rules of Sailing is published. Unless expressly retained, Rules Opinions will expire on 31 December in the last year of the rules cycle.
- 2.5 This service must not be used as a ‘substitute’ appeal process; its purpose is to provide considered opinions on questions on the RRS.
- 2.6 Where these procedures refer to the Chair of ROC or RRC, their functions may be exercised by the relevant Vice-Chair if the Chair agrees.

3. Rules Opinion Working Group (ROWG)

- 3.1 The ROWG is a joint working group appointed by the ROC and RRC. It is responsible for:
 - (a) the overall management of the Rule Opinion procedure;
 - (b) deciding what other Committees, Sub-committees, Commissions or Working Groups should be consulted on a Rule Opinion;
 - (c) maintaining the Pool;
 - (d) deciding the final draft of a Rule Opinion; and
 - (e) deciding what recommendations to make to other bodies based on a Rule Opinion (e.g. proposed rule change, suggested Case, amendment to Manuals etc.).
- 3.2 The ROWG reports to the ROC and RRC through the Chairs of those Committees.
- 3.3 In the event of a dispute or uncertainty about these procedures, the Chairs’ decision is final. However, this does not change the duties and responsibilities of the ROC and RRC under the Constitution and their terms of reference.

4. Pool of Race Officials (Pool)

- 4.1 The ROWG must annually appoint and maintain a pool of WS Race Officials who can be called upon to form panels to answer questions under this procedure (“the Pool”).
- 4.2 Members of the Team Racing Rules WG, the Match Racing Rules WG and the Umpired Fleet Racing WG will always form part of the Pool.

- 4.3 The Pool must contain sufficient numbers of WS Race Officials from each race official discipline, and from across sailing disciplines, to allow Panels to have the necessary experience and expertise to answer questions.
- 4.4 A member of the Pool may be removed at any time by the Chairs of the ROC and RRC having considered the recommendation of the ROWG. Members who do not contribute to Panels when appointed must be considered for removal.
- 4.5 The proposed membership of the Pool must be agreed with the Chairs of the ROC and RRC each year. The review of the membership should include an element of rotation to allow new WS Race Officials involvement in the system.

5. Panels

- 5.1 Where it is agreed that World Sailing will provide a Rule Opinion on a question submitted, the ROWG will appoint a panel of five members of the Pool to draft the Rule Opinion ("the Panel"). The Panel should have a majority of members who have the necessary experience and expertise to consider the question.
- 5.2 One member of the Panel will be appointed to chair its discussions. Decisions of the Panel are by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the chair of the Panel has a second and casting vote.
- 5.3 Once appointed, the Panel will be expected to provide a draft Rule Opinion in seven days. If a Pool member is unable to commit to this timescale, they must inform the Chair of the ROWG and ordinarily will be expected to decline appointment on that occasion.

6. Questions

- 6.1 A question to World Sailing under these procedures may be submitted by:
 - (a) a World Sailing Race Official;
 - (b) a World Sailing Member (as defined by the Constitution); or
 - (c) another body in the World Sailing governance structure.
- 6.2 Questions can be sent via email to: raceofficials@sailing.org.
- 6.3 Questions must be asked in a concise way to allow for a short answer. They should address actual incidents and should not, ordinarily, ask hypothetical or unrealistic questions about the RRS. Hypothetical questions will only be considered if they deal with an urgent or important question about the RRS.
- 6.4 Once received, a question must first be reviewed by the ROWG to ensure it is suitable for consideration of Rule Opinion. The question may only be edited with the agreement of the questioner. If the ROWG does not agree with the proposed wording, it may decline to refer the question to a Panel.
- 6.5 If a question is too complex, the ROWG will decline to submit the question to a Panel. The questioner must be informed, with a copy of the decision to the Chairs of ROC and RRC.
- 6.6 If a question highlights a problem with the RRS or race official procedures, the ROWG will refer the question to the relevant Committee, Sub-committee, Commission or Working Group. The Chairs of ROC and RRC must be consulted first. The questioner must be informed of the action taken. The question is not then submitted for decision.
- 6.7 ROWG will identify the question as either a Q&A or a Rapid Response Call (Match, Team, or Umpired Fleet Racing).

7. Procedure for Answering

- 7.1 The ROWG may at any time provide feedback or comments to the Panel for it to consider. The Panel may ask the ROWG for guidance and the ROWG may also consult with the Chairs of ROC and RRC for their guidance.
- 7.2 The draft Rule Opinion is to be sent to the ROWG for final approval.
- 7.3 If the ROWG concludes that the final draft Rule Opinion highlights a problem with the RRS or race official procedures, it must refer the question to the relevant Committee, Sub-committee, Commission or Working Group. The Chairs of ROC and RRC must be consulted first. The questioner must be informed of the action taken and the Rule Opinion will not be issued.
- 7.4 Once the ROWG has approved the final draft Rule Opinion, it must be sent to the Chairs of ROC and RRC. If they do not comment or reply in seven days, then the Rule Opinion becomes final.
- 7.5 If the ROWG does not agree on the Panel's final answer, then it must refer the case to the Chairs of ROC and RRC and their decision on the Rule Opinion is final.
- 7.6 The ROWG must decide whether the Rule Opinion should be referred to:
 - (a) ROC or RRC for consideration of a Proposal for a rule change;
 - (b) RRC or the appropriate working group for consideration of a Case or Call;
 - (c) ROC or its Sub-committees with a recommendation to change race official procedures (including a Manual); or
 - (d) any other Committee, Sub-committee or Commission with a recommendation.

8. Publication

- 8.1 The ROWG must arrange for all Rule Opinions to be published via the World Sailing Executive Office.
- 8.2 However, if the ROWG does not consider the Rule Opinion will assist other race officials with their duties, then it must not be published and be provided privately to the questioner. The Rule Opinion is not confidential and may be shared by the questioner provided that the full Rule Opinion is used.
- 8.3 All Rule Opinions are to include as a footer the following:
'This is an opinion of a panel of World Sailing Officials who have been selected by the Race Officials Committee and Racing Rules Committee to provide expert answers to question or calls. This opinion is not an authoritative interpretation of the Racing Rules of Sailing.'