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Swimwear Guidance

The Swim England Swimming Leadership Group were asked to consider a relaxation of Regulation 411, for individuals who as a result of either their religious beliefs or a pre-existing medical condition would like to wear a swimsuit which would otherwise be considered “Illegal” at a competitive swimming event.

The Swim England Swimming Leadership Group is also taking the opportunity to clarify the use of period wear in competition.

Having considered the questions the Swimming Leadership Group would like to offer the following advice to all those involved in competitive swimming either as an event organiser, participant, technical official or volunteer.

This guidance is for Swim England events only – Swim Wales and Scottish Swimming have not as yet amended their rules/guidance

Alternative Wear

At all levels of licensed meet (1,2,3 and 4), and Swim England National Events (Summer, Winter, County Team and Masters Championships) the event referee(s) shall remain in control of the competition and shall remain free to use their discretion, experience, training and common sense in order to make decisions with regard to ensuring a fair and even competition for all participants.

At all levels of licensed meet (1,2,3 and 4), and Swim England National Events (Summer, Winter, County Team and Masters Championships) the Swim England Swimming Leadership Group has decided to allow a relaxation of Regulation 411, so that for either religious or medical reasons swimmers may compete in a swim suit that covers more of the body than would otherwise be permitted.

- Suits shall be made of a textile material as per the current FINA Rules.
- There is no limit to how many pieces the suit is made up from (i.e. “Trousers/bottoms”, top and head covering).
- Suits which the referee believes would be capable of enhancing a swimmers performance will not be permitted.
- Swimmers wishing to swim in such a suit shall (either themselves or their representative) present the suit to the event referee for inspection prior to their swim. Alternatively, a Certificate of Exception with a listed swimwear exception may be presented.
- The referee’s decision shall be final.

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Once the referee has been informed of a swimmer wishing to wear a suit, as described above, there is no requirement for the referee to question the swimmer further, the Swim England Swimming Leadership Group do not want athletes being asked why they wish to wear the suit. The same process is to be followed if the referee is presented with a Certificate of Exception including a listed swimwear exception.

Some examples of swimwear which would be considered to be acceptable under this guidance would be:



Please note, the categories above are not intended to be prescriptive. Where appropriate, swimwear may be chosen from either category.

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Period Wear

What can be worn?

- A specific period swim costume can be worn during training (at any time) or where competitions are held under Swim England Laws and Regulations. This includes all unlicensed and licensed swimming competitions, including Swim England national competitions across both age group and Masters swimming.
- Period pants can be worn underneath a race costume during training (at any time) or in competition at all events held under Swim England Laws and Regulations. This includes all unlicensed and licensed swimming competitions, including Swim England national competitions across both age group and Masters swimming.

All items worn in competition must be made of a textile material as per the current FINA Rules. This policy does not permit a swimmer to wear two full swimming costumes.

In competition actions

A technical official is required to report rule infractions to the Referee who determines whether or not a swimmer should be disqualified.

The following practices are required to prevent a swimmer from being embarrassed in the event a technical official reports the wearing of a second layer when it is period wear:

- The referee must be advised in an advance of the race that a swimmer will be wearing period pants. This can be done by the swimmer or by a coach / team manager. The swimmer's privacy will be respected by all individuals.
- A referee should ensure that a swimmer, team manager or coach can discuss the matter in private space, wherever possible. They should discreetly inform the other referees appointed to that session.

If a technical official does notice the second layer, they should report the infraction to the referee who will make the necessary determination i.e the swimmer is not disqualified.

If no notification is provided prior to the race, the swimmer will be disqualified.

Referees should always check with the lead referee that no notification has been provided prior to making a disqualification for this infraction.

Limitations

Those swimmers seeking to set British and other national (including England), continental or world records at Swim England Events must be fully compliant with FINA swimsuit laws, which do not permit the wearing of two swimsuits or layers at any time.

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Events organised by British Swimming, Scottish Swimming and Swim Wales are not held under Swim England Laws and Regulations and are therefore not covered by this guidance.

Updated 24/04/2022

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Approved May 2022

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