



INF World Class Officiating

Interim COVID-19 Umpire Appointments Policy January 2021

1. Introduction

As netball nations begin to emerge from COVID-19 related restrictions in some regions, INF has considered the role and support of the governing body in enabling the return to international play. Specifically, the INF Board has considered the appointment of Umpires to international netball matches and undertook a survey to understand views of the Members and officiating community. This paper outlines an interim policy that has been developed and approved by the INF Board taking those views into account.

The INF policy on appointing Umpires and Umpires Appointment Panel (UAP) is detailed in the [INF Procedure for Appointment of Umpires to Rankings Matches](#). INF will continue to appoint neutral umpires to all international matches and test series according to this policy during 'normal times', the policy is not being changed.

However, whilst COVID-19 restrictions on international travel remain, quarantine and virus testing requirements exist in some Member countries, and to ensure we take into account the understandable concerns that we share with many in our netball community regarding the risk of travelling, etc., INF has agreed to put in place a **specific adapted procedure** for Umpire Appointments that demonstrates our commitment to supporting the return of international netball.

This interim COVID-19 Umpire Appointments Policy is to be used to appoint umpires and UAP to international matches when returning to international play. The usual process of recommendations and appointments will continue in netWorld, as outlined in the [INF Procedure for Appointment of Umpires to Rankings Matches](#), but with some adaptations to enable matches between the senior teams of Member countries to continue to be used for rankings purposes, even in these exceptional circumstances.

The impacts of COVID-19 are very fluid with respect to travel, border controls and quarantines, and may therefore require adjustment of any timelines mentioned as situations unfold. This interim policy provides the spirit and intent of how to manage through any adjustments required with clear and open communication between the host countries and INF.

INF will review the Interim COVID-19 Umpire Appointments Procedure amendment at least every 3 months and report back to all Member countries the outcome of that review.

2. Key principles for officiating during the return to play agreed by the INF Board:

- **Enable and encourage return** to play as we emerge from COVID-19.
- Support the **delivery of thrilling international events**.
- **Protect the integrity** of competition through the appointment of umpires.
- Be understood as solely to manage in these **exceptional circumstances**.
- Be reviewed quarterly or as circumstances change.
- UAP and Umpires' costs will be shared equally between the National Associations involved.

3. Summary of adaptations for Umpire Appointments during the return to play:

3.1. INF retains the appointment of Umpires to all international matches.

3.2. INF will continue to look to appoint neutral umpires to all international matches following a process which considers:

- Risk assessment and mitigation plan that considers international travel restrictions/requirements, virus testing opportunities/challenges.
- Wellbeing of umpires, availability/willingness to travel.
- Cost to host nations to fund impact of quarantine, testing etc.

3.3. In considering point 3.2 above, if it is not possible to appoint neutral umpires and in order to support our Return to Play commitment, INF will appoint non-neutral umpires.

3.4. All international matches with non-neutral umpires appointed by INF will be world ranking matches

4. Interim Covid-19 Umpire and UAP Appointments Process

- INF Regional Federation or Full Member who is planning to host an international match, or series, submits an Umpire Request Form into netWorld as per the normal timelines in the [INF Procedure for Appointment of Umpires to Rankings Matches](#).
 - Event hosts must provide an outline of the safeguards they will put in place to protect the health and wellbeing of umpires and UAP that are being appointed to the event in this Umpire Request Form.
- On receipt of an Umpire Request in netWorld, International Umpires, ITP, and ITP Cadet will be notified automatically and will have 7 days to mark themselves as 'unavailable' in netWorld should they not want to be considered for this international event.
 - This step needs to happen prior to recommendations being made by International Testing Panel (ITP) and Regional Officiating Coordinator (ROC) in netWorld.
- INF appoints UAP (who are ITP) through the usual process from recommendations by the ROC.
 - UAP remain non-neutral and from host country (at least 1 to be in attendance per venue).
- INF appoints umpires (neutral and non-neutral) through the recommendations from the ROC based on individual (ITP) recommendations in netWorld as follows:
 - Neutral umpires are appointed by INF, one more than the number of teams competing in an event.
 - The same number of non-neutral umpires, who originate from the competing countries, are appointed by INF as 'reserves' for the event.
- Host countries of the event and International Umpiring Manager (IUM) agree a date by which a decision has to be made to proceed with the appointment of neutral umpires OR if non-neutral umpires who are 'reserves' for the event are to be utilised.
 - This agreed decision date will be communicated to all appointed UAP, neutral umpires and non-neutral 'reserve' umpires.
- The host countries must provide the IUM (no later than) 14 days before the agreed date with the following:
 - A detailed risk assessment and mitigation plan considering international travel restrictions/requirements, virus testing opportunities/challenges with a view to:
 - Prioritising the health and wellbeing of all participants
 - Following the host nation government guidelines and remain socially responsible
 - Adopting protocols that minimise and prevent the spread of COVID 19 and minimise the risks of participants contracting COVID 19.
 - How the health and wellbeing of umpires and UAP will be assured.
 - Financial impact on host country to fund any impact of quarantine, virus testing, etc. for officials.
- The IUM (no later than) 7 days before the agreed date will make a decision on how to proceed with the umpire appointments in conjunction with all the appointed UAP, considering the information provided from the host countries, and in accordance with the principles agreed by the INF Board (as listed above).
 - The decision made may lead to a mix of neutral and non-neutral umpires or all non-neutral umpires being appointed, however, in all cases of allocations the principle is that any matches played will contribute to world rankings.
 - Should there be a mix of neutral and non-neutral umpires appointed, neutral umpires will be allocated to all matches unless the welfare of neutral umpires is compromised or appointed UAP have concerns over performance.
 - Should all umpires appointed be non-neutral, they will be allocated by the appointed UAP based on performance, not by representation of the playing countries.

- The IUM (no later than) 5 days before the agreed date, will provide the INF CEO with the decision made on how to proceed with the appointments so it can be ratified that all the principles agreed by the INF Board (as listed above) have been upheld.
- By the agreed date, the decision on how to proceed with the appointments will be communicated to host countries, participating countries, all appointed UAP, neutral umpires and non-neutral 'reserve' umpires and their home countries.