NSW Department of Education

School cross country carnival – guide for convenors

The history of NSW School cross country is marked by significant milestones and developments over the years. The sport has evolved from its origins in the early 20th century to become a prominent part of school sports in NSW.

The history of NSW School cross country is a testament to the dedication and passion of students, par ents, and educators who have contributed to the sport's growth and success. The events and cha mpionships serve as a platform for students to showcase their skills and compete at a high level, cont ributing to the overall development of the sport in NSW.

Beyond competition, cross country carnivals promote teamwork, community spirit and a healthy lifestyle among students. This guide is designed to equip school carnival convenors with the essential knowledge, tools, and strategies to organise a safe, enjoyable, and memorable cross country carnival.

Organisation and planning

Define the general goals and objectives of the event by considering the following:

Who is the carnival for?

- Whole school
- Part of the school, for example, students aged 8 years and up
- Competitors only
- Interschool competition, for example, zone or district

This will determine the number of participants that you need to cater for, as well as the structure of the carnival.

What type of carnival will it be and who will participate?

This is a school decision. There are many factors that may influence which carnival type is best, such as the facilities available, the number of staff available, the number of students and how transportation will be organised.

There are many ways to hold a school carnival. The 2 most common carnival types are:

- Traditional: students enter in correct age group and then participate at scheduled times.
- Participants only: the carnival is only for those students who are going to compete and have pre-entered in correct age group prior to the day.

When is the carnival going to be held?

- Check the school calendar, check district/zone/association/state dates.
- Where possible, leave at least 3-4 weeks between school and district/zone carnivals to allow for a postponement and to finalise results.
- Set a date.
- Plan a back-up date marked in both the school calendar and organised with the venue.

A school cross country carnival offers benefits beyond individual participation and progression. It promotes unity and school spirit as students, teachers and families celebrate physical activity and teamwork. For all students, it fosters personal growth, boosting self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, its inclusivity encourages belonging and community, enhancing the school's positive environment. The greater the student involvement, the greater the potential benefits for the school.

Venue

Select a venue (if not being held on school grounds) and try to book 12 months in advance. Make sure the venue meets the requirements for your carnival. Consider the size of the venue, ensuring areas for students to sit, and whether the toilet facilities cater for both the students the number of public visitors at the venue.

Some other factors to consider when choosing a venue.

- How will students travel to the venue?
- Does the venue have a PA system?
- Does the race area need a lot of preparation and markings? Who will organise this and, if so, when?
- Does the venue supply equipment? (cones, bunting, line markings for start/finish)
- Is there an area big enough for marshalling competitors?
- Is there a suitable covered area for recording results?
- Who will unlock the changeroom and other facilities?
- Does the venue have a canteen? Can you run the canteen, or does someone have a contract with the canteen?
- Is there cover for heat or rain. Can you bring your own coverage for officials?
- Are there facilities and services available for students with disability? For example, are there appropriate toilets/amenities, seating accessibility?

Program of events

The program of events may be influenced by the facilities at the venue, for example, the size of the venue, visibility of runners for safety (particularly with younger runners), how many laps are required to make the distance required.

- Develop the program taking the following into consideration:
    - Keep the longer races separated so that spectators are not waiting too long between races.
    - For Primary – 3,000m races not all at once, mix up with the 2,000m races and K-2 races which are shorter distances.
    - For Secondary – Break up the 8,000m races and the 6,000m races.
- Schools should consult the PSSA Cross Country and CHSSA Cross Country Handbooks for guidance with rules. If schools create ‘local’ rules, they should be published before the event and included in the program. While primary and secondary school carnival rules don't have to match, alignment where possible is recommended.

- Ensure accessibility of the program for the day for both staff and spectators. Provide hard copies for officials and consider making it available online for spectators and participants. If choosing the online option, communicate clearly with spectators and participants, and consider displaying multiple QR codes around the venue for easy access.
- Print large A3 posters of the event order and display these around the venue as a quick reference guide for students and spectators.

Primary school distances

Age Group	Boys	Girls
8/9 years	2,000m	2,000m
10 years	2,000m	2,000m
11 years	3,000m	3,000m
12/13 years	3,000m	3,000m
All multi class	2,000m	2,000m

If it is a K-6 carnival, the younger runners (5/6/7-year-olds) could run as Kindergarten, Year 1 & Year 2. The distance for these races is a school decision. A suggestion would be:

- 1,000m for Kindergarten
- 1,500m for Year 1 and Year 2
- The 8-year-old Year 2 students can be given the option to run in the 8/9-year-old races

Secondary school distances

Age Group	Boys	Girls
12 years	3,000m	3,000m
13 years	3,000m	3,000m
14 years	4,000m	4,000m
15 years	4,000m	4,000m
16 years	6,000m	4,000m
17 years	6,000m	4,000m
18+ years	8,000m	6,000m
All multi class	3,000m	3,000m

The program for the day should clearly communicate the protest system in place. If you decide not to have any avenues available to dispute officials' decisions or results, this should also be clearly communicated.

Officials

Officials are essential at a school cross country carnival to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of the event. As student supervision must be undertaken by teachers, having teachers serve as officials as well brings several advantages.

- Teachers are familiar with the school's culture, policies and expectations, which helps maintain consistency and adherence to the school's values throughout the carnival.
- Teachers can also provide constructive feedback to students, fostering a positive learning environment. They can offer encouragement and guidance, whether students are excelling or facing challenges, promoting personal growth and development through the event.
- Teachers provide duty of care at the various checkpoints on the course, particularly when using checkpoints to maintain line of sight.

The following are some considerations for ensuring officials are well prepared for the carnival.

- Utilise the School Sport Unit's **school cross country carnival-guide for officials** and **cross country officiating teaching resource** to help teachers prepare for the carnival.
- Try to give staff a preference of the duty or position they would like to have.
- Have clear responsibilities and duties outlined for each official and volunteer. Provide a printed copy of the rules and duties to the teachers before the carnival.
- If needed, parents/carers, community members and/or students from a local high school (if a primary carnival) can be used as officials. Give them a supporting role such as setting up/packing up, running water, helping at check points or helping with marshalling.
- Schedule a briefing session for staff and volunteers before the carnival.

If you need additional officials, you can contact the local running club and/or local high schools.

Entry into events

Entry into races involves a systematic process to ensure organisation and participation of all students. There is a variety of options to choose from.

- Class entry form: The teacher nominates students by filling out a form and submits it to the carnival organiser by a specified date.
- House entry form: House captains or teachers complete nomination forms for different age divisions during a house meeting.
- Age group entry form: Separate forms are created for each race. They can be completed by houses, classes or the school convenor.
- Individual entry form: This system is used for championship level competitions or when student participation depends on parent/carer consent through the entry form.
- Post entries: Entries are not accepted before the carnival. Competitors are called on the day of the event and students competing are organised by the marshal.

Try to have a process that aims to include as many students as possible. The carnival provides an opportunity for students to challenge themselves and contribute to the school's sense of community.

Students with disability – multi-class events

Schools must fulfill a legal obligation under the NSW Disability Discrimination Act to provide equal access and opportunities for all students. Inclusivity also shows a commitment to creating a diverse environment where all students can thrive and showcase their talents fairly.

Give multi-class runners a choice in how they would like to participate. This could be with peers of the same age and gender, other multi-class runners or within their classification. All multi-class runners' results should be recorded in the same way as for able-bodied students.

Students with disability don't need a formal classification to participate at a school carnival. However, they should be encouraged to progress along the Representative School Sport Pathway for its numerous benefits and opportunities. Schools are encouraged to provide support for students and families with the classification process.

Check if multi-class runners already have a sport-specific classification. Information on obtaining a classification can be found at:

https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/sport/disability-and-inclusion/classification

Eligible classifications

- **Deaf/hard of hearing -** T01 (AU2)
    - Athletes competing with T01 (AU2) classification will be required to remove any hearing devices prior to the commencement of the race or once final instructions have been given by the starter
- **Visual impairment -** T11, T12 or T13
    - T11 athletes must have a guide.
    - T12 and T13 athletes may elect to have a guide.
    - For runner information and requirements refer to School Sport Australia cross country rules and guidelines appendix 6.8 - Sighted Guide guidelines.
- **Intellectual impairment -** T20, T21*
- **Physical impairment:**
    - **Cerebral Palsy** - T35, T36, T37 or T38
    - **Short Stature** - T40* or T41*
    - **Upper limb** - T42, T43, T44, T45 or T46
    - **Transplant** - T60*
    - **Lower limb** (with prosthesis) - T62*, T63* or T64*

* The classifications with an asterisk require medical clearance to participate in the championships.

Encourage the classifying of students as early as possible, noting that a formal classification is generally not required until Association level. Check with your zone executive or zone cross country convenor before the school carnival to determine the level of classification needed for students to compete.

Equipment

Considerations:

- Organise equipment at least one month before the carnival as this will allow time for repairs and for purchasing additional items. The venue may supply or lease out equipment.
- Make a list of exactly what equipment you need - see sample checklist below.
- Make a list of resources you require for recording results, for example, recording sheets, laptops, judging sheets. Remember tables, chairs and shelters for officials.
- Put a responsible person in charge of the equipment on the day. This person should issue the equipment and check that it is returned.
- Consider how equipment will be transported to the venue.
- Do you need a public announcing system? Check that it is charged, in working condition and that it is sufficient for your needs.
- Two-way radios are helpful for the use of key officials. Ensure batteries are charged and personnel using them are provided with a training session.
- Do you need additional shelter such as tents or umbrellas?

Sample equipment checklist – cross country

Equipment	Checked out	Checked in
Starting equipment		
Earmuffs or ear plugs		
Clipboards		
Whistles, bell		
Stop watches?		
Course maps		
Witches' hats, cones and markers - a variety of colours		
Course signage		
Bunting, flags, pigtails & rope (for marking the course)		
Stop watches (if timing)		
Place judge's recording slips		
Place cards, place sticks		
Recording sheets		

Point score sheets		
Computer, extension cords and printer, as required		
Walkie talkies and spare batteries		
Programs		
Stationery – pens, pencils, stapler, staples, tape, highlighters, markers, paper clips, wet weather recording folders, clips, paper, pencils, spare paper		
Certificates/ribbons		
House flags, school flags		
White/yellow/red flags (for officials, if available)		
Water station – disposable cups, water		
Tables and chairs		
Loud hailers (spare batteries) or a public announcing system		
First aid kit and student medication		
Individual health care plans for students with health care needs and medication		
Student consent forms, emergency contact information, medical information		
Appropriate storage containers for student medication		
Sunscreen		
Garbage bags		
Batteries		
Hand sanitiser		
Rubbish tongs		
Shade tents (anchored)		
Staff sign-on sheets and refreshments		
Camera/video recording equipment (optional)		

Sample cross country carnival checklists

It is important to start organising a cross country carnival as early as possible to ensure a well - organised day is provided for students.

12 months prior to carnival day (end of the carnival)	
Book the venue (including back-up date).	☐
Publicise date/s on school calendar.	☐
Develop a budget. Costs can include: • venue hire • equipment hire and purchases • ribbons, medals and/or certificates • transportation.	☐
Update championship records Updating carnival records/results should occur immediately after each carnival. Ensure trophies/ribbons are ready for any upcoming award ceremonies.	☐
Evaluation notes from previous carnivals • What went well? • What can be improved? • What needs to change/be removed?	☐

One or two months prior to carnival	
Book transport, confirm venue and any hired equipment.	☐
Publicise dates to students/parents/carers.	☐
Check equipment requirements, organise certificates, ribbons, trophies.	☐
Organise to have parts of the course marked out before the day.	☐
Organise program and officials.	☐
Organise risk management plan and permission procedures.	☐
Organise and distribute information and permission forms to students/parents/carers.	☐
Organise recording sheets and officials' folders.	☐

One or two weeks prior to carnival	
Conduct a staff briefing to ensure teachers are familiar with their roles. Organise additional training, as required.	☐
Organise student entries (if occurring prior to the carnival).	☐
Hold house meetings and brief students on organisation of the day including travel to and from the venue and on behaviour expectations.	☐
Check the venue booking and all equipment is available as requested.	☐

After the carnival	
Check equipment is returned.	☐
Determine results such as age champion, house winners.	☐
Select team for the next level of representation, for example, zone/district. (refer to information supplied by the next convener)	☐
Organise the next level of representation, if required, for example, transport, permission notes, entries, as required.	☐
Update any school records.	☐
Evaluate the carnival, collect feedback from staff and students.	☐
Prepare for the next year's carnival.	☐

Suggested cross country carnival officials' job list

The number of officials required for each role can vary based on the scale of the carnival and the number of participants. Here are the suggested roles for officials, along with approximate numbers for a medium-sized school:

Role	Suggested minimum number	Notes
Carnival convenor	1	
Assistant carnival convenor	1	Where possible, the assistant is 'shadowing' the carnival convenor to succession plan.
Announcer	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role.
Place judge	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role.
Starter	1	Where possible, ensure the starter possesses experience and/or training in starting races.
Marshals	2	An experienced teacher familiar with the children. When ready, one of the marshals would walk the children to the starting line.
Chief timekeeper (if timing the event - optional)	1	An experienced teacher or member of the Executive team takes on the role.
Timekeepers - optional	1 per child for top 6-10 runners	This can be reduced if you have access to electronic timing. Can be parent helpers or high school students if a primary event.
Checkpoint staff	Number will vary depending on the course	Required around the course particularly at points where line of sight is hindered. Can be parent helpers at points where line of sight to teaching staff is maintained.
First Aid Officer	1-2	Can be hired or teacher/s with suitable first aid qualifications.
Recorders	2	A teacher and a parent helper could do this job. Involves collating results/places, records (if timing) and point scores.