

SCO INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGY OLYMPIAD

SCO IBO RULES & REGULATIONS

A global exam-rule guide for students, teachers, parents, and schools

Designed for Grade 8-12 learners and benchmarked with global International Biology Olympiad expectations for fair assessment, scientific integrity, biological reasoning, practical-method interpretation, data analysis, and future-ready life-science learning.

- three annual SCO cycles: Spring, Summer, and Winter
- multiple online exam-date choices across the year
- IBO-style emphasis on application, practical reasoning, biological ethics, and data interpretation
- clear rules for registration, exam conduct, proctoring, results, awards, and school implementation

Eligibility	Exam Rules	Integrity	Proctoring	Awards
Grade 8-12	IBO-Style	Fair Play	Online Safe	Global Pathway

SCO IBO Rules & Regulations

Global Biology Olympiad-Aligned Online Examination Framework for Grade 8 to Grade 12

Document Contents

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1. Purpose and status	How SCO IBO is positioned as a global online biology olympiad and preparation benchmark.
2. Global IBO alignment	How the rules reflect IBO-style understanding, practical problem solving, topic balance, and fair-play culture.
3. Eligibility and registration	Grade, identity, school, parent, institutional and account rules.
4. Cycle and exam schedule rules	Spring, Summer and Winter cycles, date slots and visitor-facing date display.
5. Exam format and assessment	Online theory, data-rich biological reasoning, virtual-practical interpretation and marking rules.
6. Exam conduct and proctoring	Permitted materials, device rules, camera/microphone, browser integrity and exam-room standards.
7. Integrity, penalties and appeals	Cheating, unfair practice, evidence review, result finalization and appeal process.
8. Responsibilities	Rules for students, teachers, schools, parents and SCO operations.

1. Purpose and Official Status of SCO IBO

The SCO International Biology Olympiad (SCO IBO) is a School Connect Olympiad programme for Grade 8 to Grade 12 learners worldwide. It is designed to make Biology Olympiad preparation and assessment accessible through an online, cycle-based model with multiple exam dates across the year.

SCO IBO is benchmarked with the spirit of the International Biology Olympiad: scientific curiosity, understanding over rote memorization, practical reasoning, biological insight, data interpretation, ethics, and fair competition. It is a global online alternative for students who want to check their preparation level, strengthen Biology Olympiad readiness, and develop future-ready life-science skills.

Important status note

SCO IBO is an independent SCO Olympiad programme. It should not be represented as the official IBO national-team selection route unless a country, school system, or authorized institutional partner separately declares such a route. Its role is to provide structured online preparation, benchmarking, reporting, and recognition aligned with global Biology Olympiad expectations.

2. Global IBO Alignment and Pedagogical Standards

The global IBO framework emphasizes biological understanding, processing skills and application of knowledge rather than direct recall. SCO IBO follows this pedagogical direction by asking students to interpret unfamiliar biological situations, read diagrams, analyse data, reason from experiments, and explain life processes with evidence.

2.1 IBO-style academic balance adapted for SCO IBO

SCO IBO questions should be drawn from the Grade 8-12 syllabus pathway while gradually building toward the global IBO-style domain balance used in senior biology olympiad preparation.

IBO-Style Domain	Global Benchmark Weight	SCO IBO Interpretation
Cell Biology	20%	Cell structure and function, microscopy images, microbiology basics, biotechnology and molecular understanding.
Plant Anatomy and Physiology	15%	Plant tissues, transport, nutrition, reproduction, growth responses and applied botany.

IBO-Style Domain	Global Benchmark Weight	SCO IBO Interpretation
Animal Anatomy and Physiology	25%	Human and vertebrate systems, homeostasis, immunity, reproduction, coordination and health.
Ethology	5%	Animal behaviour, adaptation, observation and interpretation of behaviour patterns.
Genetics and Evolution	20%	Heredity, DNA, variation, natural selection, evolution, population reasoning and inheritance analysis.
Ecology	10%	Ecosystems, biodiversity, food webs, populations, conservation and human impact.
Biosystematics	5%	Classification, taxonomy, organism identification and comparative biology.

2.2 Practical and experimental reasoning

The official IBO practical orientation assesses how students solve biological problems using skills and methods commonly used in biological laboratories. SCO IBO converts this into an online-friendly format through virtual practicals, image-based analysis, microscope-view interpretation, data tables, experimental design, lab-safety cases, graphs, classification keys, and evidence-based conclusions.

- Observation, measurement, classification, variable control and hypothesis formation.
- Graph, table, chart, diagram, photograph and microscopy-image interpretation.
- Experiment design, data recording, result interpretation and conclusion writing.
- Accuracy, correct biological terminology, meaningful units and appropriate significant figures where numerical data are used.
- Ethical biological practice, safety awareness, biodiversity respect and responsible use of biological materials.

3. Eligibility, Registration and Identity Rules

3.1 Student eligibility

- SCO IBO is open to students studying in Grade 8, Grade 9, Grade 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12, or equivalent school levels in international curricula.
- Students should register under the correct grade/class. Grade selection should match the learner's current academic enrolment at the time of registration unless SCO announces a separate rule for a special batch.
- A student must use accurate name, school, country, grade, email and identity details. Incorrect details may affect certificate, ranking, result access and verification.
- Students may participate through individual registration or school/institution registration, depending on the active SCO portal flow for the selected country or school.
- The same student should not create duplicate accounts for the same olympiad cycle. Account duplication may lead to review or cancellation of duplicate attempts.

3.2 School and institutional registration

- Schools may register students for one or more cycle windows and may choose available exam dates according to academic calendar, time zone, school readiness and student allocation.
- Schools must submit correct student data and should verify names, grades, email addresses and subject selections before final confirmation.
- Schools are responsible for communicating exam rules, date windows, system requirements and proctoring expectations to participating students and parents.
- For bulk registration, schools should maintain a local attendance and communication record so that exam access issues can be resolved quickly.

3.3 Parent/guardian role

- Parents should help younger students understand the exam rules but must not assist during the exam attempt.
- Parents should ensure a quiet environment, stable internet, and a suitable device before the exam begins.
- Parent support is allowed before and after the exam for preparation, scheduling, account access and result understanding; it is not allowed during the live exam attempt.

4. SCO IBO Cycle and Exam Schedule Rules

SCO IBO is conducted under three annual cycles: Spring, Summer and Winter. Each cycle may contain multiple exam dates to support schools and students across academic calendars and time zones. The visitor-facing format must use readable dates such as 03 January 2026, not raw database date-time values.

Exam Year	Cycle	Exam Window	Qualifier / Stage Window	Result Publish Date
2026	Spring	01 January 2026 - 31 March 2026	01 January 2026 - 31 March 2026	30 April 2026
2026	Summer	01 April 2026 - 31 July 2026	01 April 2026 - 31 July 2026	31 August 2026
2026	Winter	01 August 2026 - 31 December 2026	01 August 2026 - 31 December 2026	28 February 2027
2027	Spring	01 January 2027 - 31 March 2027	01 January 2027 - 31 March 2027	30 April 2027
2027	Summer	01 April 2027 - 31 July 2027	01 April 2027 - 31 July 2027	31 August 2027
2027	Winter	01 August 2027 - 31 December 2027	01 August 2027 - 31 December 2027	29 February 2028

4.1 Configured online exam date slots from SCO IBO plan data

The configured plan data contains multiple online date options for Grade 8-12 SCO IBO Biology plans. The portal may show only the dates that are active, available and applicable to the selected school, student, country, cycle or operational batch.

Cycle	Visitor-facing online exam date options
Winter 2025-26 (SCO Exam Year 2026)	06 September 2025, 14 September 2025, 27 September 2025, 04 October 2025, 12 October 2025, 25 October 2025, 01 November 2025, 09 November 2025, 22 November 2025, 06 December 2025, 14 December 2025, 27 December 2025
Spring 2026	03 January 2026, 11 January 2026, 24 January 2026, 07 February 2026, 08 February 2026, 28 February 2026, 07 March 2026, 08 March 2026, 28 March 2026
Summer 2026	04 April 2026, 12 April 2026, 25 April 2026, 02 May 2026, 10 May 2026, 23 May 2026, 06 June 2026, 14 June 2026, 27 June 2026, 04 July 2026, 12 July 2026, 25 July 2026
Winter 2026-27 (SCO Exam Year 2027)	04 September 2026, 12 September 2026, 20 September 2026, 02 October 2026, 10 October 2026, 18 October 2026, 06 November 2026, 14 November 2026, 15 November 2026, 04 December 2026, 12 December 2026, 20 December 2026

- The exam-date list is a public guidance list and not a guarantee of availability for every user at all times.
- Final exam access depends on registration status, payment/approval status where applicable, exam plan mapping, student login readiness and portal availability.
- Students should check the official SCO dashboard before the scheduled attempt and should not wait until the last few minutes to log in.

5. Exam Format, Assessment and Marking Rules

5.1 Online exam model

SCO IBO is an online Biology Olympiad. The exact number of questions, duration, marks, negative marking and question distribution may vary by grade and official exam plan. The exam page or student dashboard is the final source for the specific test assigned to a student.

Component	Rule for SCO IBO
Question focus	Conceptual biology, application, diagrams, data tables, graphs, experimental reasoning, biological classification and life-science problem solving.
Question types	Primarily objective questions such as single-correct MCQ, multi-step reasoning MCQ, assertion-reasoning, data interpretation and image-based practical reasoning.
Grade progression	Grade 8-10 questions strengthen foundational biology and scientific reasoning; Grade 11-12 questions move toward senior olympiad depth and IBO-style domain balance.
Online practical adaptation	Virtual-practical cases, microscopy images, experimental set-ups, safety cases, lab-method interpretation, classification keys, graphing and result analysis.
Scoring	Scores are computed as per the official test configuration. Where final proctoring or integrity review applies, final marks may be adjusted after review.
Language	English is the standard global language for SCO IBO public documents unless a special translated paper is separately offered.

5.2 Rules for question quality

- Questions must test understanding, application, analysis and reasoning rather than simple fact recall.
- Questions should be age-appropriate for the grade while building toward Biology Olympiad depth.
- Diagrams, biological processes, graphs and experimental data should be clear, readable and scientifically correct.
- Distractors should be plausible but not misleading due to language ambiguity.
- No question should require unsafe experiments, unethical biological handling or inaccessible private data.

5.3 Results, ranking and certificates

- Student results are published after exam submission, evaluation and operational checks as per the relevant cycle and portal flow.
- Where proctoring or integrity review is active, a result may remain pending until review is completed.
- Ranking may be shown at class, school, country, national or international level depending on the official SCO result policy for that exam.
- Certificates should display correct student name, grade, olympiad name, year/cycle, result status and verification details as configured by SCO.
- SCO may correct clerical, technical, mapping or result-calculation errors if identified during audit.

6. Exam-Day Conduct Rules

6.1 Before the exam

1. Log in to the official SCO student dashboard using the correct account.
2. Check student name, grade, subject, olympiad and assigned exam date before starting.
3. Use a stable internet connection, charged device, updated browser and quiet room.
4. Keep only permitted materials ready. No unauthorized notes, books, websites, messaging apps or AI tools may be used during the attempt.
5. Where camera, microphone or screen permissions are required, allow permissions before beginning the exam.

6.2 During the exam

- The student must attempt the exam independently without help from parents, teachers, friends, tutors or online tools.
- The student must remain on the exam screen unless the platform gives a permitted navigation flow.
- No screenshots, photography, recording, copying, sharing or reconstruction of live exam questions is allowed.
- No communication through chat, phone, messaging application, email, social media or another device is allowed during the attempt.
- The student must not impersonate another learner or allow any person to attempt the exam on their behalf.
- If technical difficulty occurs, the student should follow the official support process and should not refresh repeatedly without instruction if it may affect the attempt.

6.3 After submission

- Once an exam is submitted, the student must not attempt to restart the same official exam unless the portal clearly provides a permitted retry due to technical review.
- Questions and answers must remain confidential after the exam. Students must not publish or circulate protected question content.
- Students should review official result, analysis, certificate and learning feedback only from the authorized SCO portal.

7. Online Proctoring and Integrity Rules

SCO IBO may use online proctoring, session logs, camera/microphone signals, browser-focus records, answer-timing patterns, identity checks and review evidence to protect fair participation. Proctoring is intended to support honest students and maintain global trust in the online exam system.

Area	Rule
Identity	The registered student must be the person taking the exam. Identity mismatch or impersonation may lead to cancellation.
Environment	The room should be quiet, well lit and free from unauthorized help, extra screens and visible notes.
Device	Use one primary exam device unless SCO explicitly allows an additional device for accessibility or school supervision.
Camera/microphone	Where required, the camera and microphone should remain available during the exam. Blocking, disabling or obstructing may trigger review.
Browser behaviour	Repeated tab switching, minimizing the exam window, screen-sharing, suspicious navigation or use of prohibited applications may be flagged.
Human assistance	Any instruction, hint, answer discussion or remote assistance during the attempt is prohibited.
Question protection	Copying, photographing, recording, downloading or sharing exam questions is prohibited.

7.1 Integrity review and evidence handling

- A suspicious event does not automatically mean a student cheated. SCO should review context, evidence and proportionality before final action.
- Where review is required, the result may show as pending or under review until finalization.
- Students and schools may be asked for clarification in serious cases.
- Raw technical logs should not be exposed publicly to students; visitor-facing explanations should show understandable categories and decisions.

7.2 Penalties for unfair practice

Penalties should be proportionate to the seriousness of the issue and aligned with global olympiad fair-play standards. Possible actions include:

- Warning or advisory note for minor procedural issues.
- Score review or partial deduction where evidence shows exam integrity was affected.
- Cancellation of the attempt where impersonation, external help, prohibited communication or question leakage is established.
- Temporary restriction from future SCO exams in serious or repeated cases.
- School-level review if a coordinated or institutional integrity issue is identified.

8. Safety, Ethics and Biology-Specific Rules

Although SCO IBO is online, it remains a Biology Olympiad and must reflect responsible life-science culture. Students should learn that biological knowledge carries ethical, safety and environmental responsibilities.

Biology Rule Area	SCO IBO Standard
Laboratory safety	Students should understand safe handling, hazard symbols, aseptic technique, microscope care, contamination prevention and responsible disposal concepts.
Animal and plant ethics	No student should be asked to perform unsafe or unethical animal handling. Online questions may use diagrams, images, data and simulated scenarios instead.
Biodiversity respect	Questions may include conservation and ecosystem ethics; students should not collect protected species or disturb habitats for preparation.
Health and biomedical topics	Health-related questions are educational and should not be treated as personal medical advice.
Data ethics	Students should interpret biological data responsibly and should not fabricate observations, measurements or conclusions.

9. Accessibility, Inclusion and Global Fairness

- SCO IBO should be accessible to students from different countries, school systems, time zones and academic calendars.
- The three-cycle model supports schools that cannot participate on a single global date.
- Exam instructions should be written in clear, student-friendly English and should avoid unnecessary cultural bias.
- Where a student requires accessibility support, the school or parent should contact SCO before the exam date so a reasonable arrangement can be reviewed.
- Result comparison should be based on the official grade, exam plan, cycle and rules applied to that cohort.

Global fairness principle

Every student should be judged by the same published rules for the applicable grade, cycle and test plan. Any special accommodation must be approved before the exam and should not create an unfair academic advantage.

10. Responsibilities of Students, Teachers, Parents and Schools

Stakeholder	Key Responsibilities
Students	Prepare honestly, follow exam instructions, keep questions confidential, maintain fair play, and complete the attempt independently.
Teachers	Guide preparation, explain rules, support conceptual learning, encourage ethical science and avoid helping during live attempts.

Stakeholder	Key Responsibilities
Parents	Provide a quiet environment, support login readiness, encourage confidence, and avoid giving help during the live exam.
Schools	Verify student details, communicate dates, manage batch readiness, support proctoring discipline and report issues promptly.
SCO Operations	Publish clear rules, maintain platform readiness, protect data, review integrity issues fairly and publish results according to policy.

11. Appeals, Corrections and Support Rules

- A student or school may raise a support request for login, technical access, identity correction, result mismatch, certificate error or verified technical interruption.
- Appeals must be submitted within the announced window, with student ID, registered email, exam name, grade, date, screenshot if applicable and a clear explanation.
- SCO may reject appeals based on unsupported claims, late submissions, repeated user-side negligence or violation of exam rules.
- SCO may correct a result or certificate if an official audit confirms a technical, clerical, mapping, calculation or publication error.
- Integrity-related decisions should be documented and reviewed proportionately before final action.

12. Data, Privacy and Certificate Verification

- Student data should be used only for registration, exam access, result processing, certificate generation, academic reporting, support and legitimate SCO operations.
- Certificates and results may include a verification code or link so schools and external viewers can validate authenticity.
- Public certificate or result verification should show only the minimum information needed to confirm authenticity.
- Schools and parents should keep login credentials secure and should not share student account access publicly.

13. Grade 8-12 Academic Scope Rule

SCO IBO should remain grade-wise and age-appropriate while progressively building toward senior Biology Olympiad depth. The following scope rule helps maintain fairness and pedagogy:

Grade Band	Expected SCO IBO Rule for Content Depth
Grade 8	Foundational life processes, cell basics, microorganisms, ecology, health, classification and observation-based reasoning.
Grade 9	Cell structure, tissues, diversity, health, natural resources and introductory data interpretation.
Grade 10	Life processes, heredity, evolution, reproduction, environment and applied biological reasoning.
Grade 11	Cell biology, biomolecules, plant and animal physiology, taxonomy and core experimental reasoning.
Grade 12	Genetics, biotechnology, ecology, evolution, human physiology, applied biology and IBO-style integrated analysis.

14. Final Student Declaration

By starting the SCO IBO exam, the student confirms that:

- The registration details are correct to the best of the student's knowledge.
- The student will attempt the exam independently and honestly.
- The student will not use unauthorized help, notes, websites, messaging, AI tools or other prohibited resources during the attempt.
- The student will not copy, record, photograph, publish or share protected exam questions.
- The student understands that violation of rules may lead to score review, cancellation, disqualification or future participation restrictions.

15. Official Benchmark References Reviewed

This SCO IBO rules document was prepared using the SCO cycle/date model and benchmarked against public International Biology Olympiad resources, including the IBO Operational Guidelines, IBO participation/preparation guidance, and IBO-style theoretical/practical examination descriptions. These references support the emphasis on understanding, application, practical problem solving, biological domain balance, fair play, safety and proportional integrity review.

Reference Area	How it informs SCO IBO rules
IBO Operational Guidelines	Theory/practical orientation, domain balance, practical skills, result moderation, fair play and proportional penalties.
IBO participation and preparation guidance	No fixed single syllabus; preparation should emphasize biological insight, analytical approach, practical skills and problem solving.
IBO 2025 exam information	Example of modern IBO-style theoretical topics and practical exam structure.
SCO cycle/date data	Three annual cycles, multiple online date slots and visitor-friendly schedule rules for Grade 8-12.