

Changes to Judges Education Programme (Breed Shows)

In response to feedback we have received from Breed Education Coordinators, Breed Clubs, Judges and societies, The Kennel Club has implemented several changes to the Judges Education Programme (Breed Shows). These adjustments aim to resolve some of the concerns and improve the overall experience. We are in the process of updating the Codes of Best Practice and the new versions will be available on the website as soon as possible. These changes are effective immediately.

Mentoring

Mentors

To help increase the pool of mentors, which is a problem for some breeds and to provide more opportunities for mentoring, Group judges who have awarded Challenge Certificates (CCs) to the relevant breed at least twice are able to be mentors for the breed should they wish to without breed club approval.

Mentoring

Concerns have been raised that some judges are trying to rush through the JEP Levels in the minimum timeframe without having gained sufficient knowledge of the breed and therefore will progress through Level 3 to the Breed Competency Assessment before they are really ready, it can then be disheartening to judges who then do not pass the assessment when this could have been identified earlier in their education of the breed. Therefore, an amendment to mentoring has been agreed. Mentors will have to agree that a judge is ready to progress or requires further mentoring in that breed. Two out of the three mentoring sessions will need to indicate that a judge has sufficient knowledge to progress before an observation can take place. The requirement for 12 months between the first and third mentoring sessions is still required.

It is important to remember that three mentoring sessions is the minimum number of sessions required and judges should take opportunities to be mentored either formally or informally throughout their judging education to help them develop in depth knowledge of a breed.

Code of Best Practice for Breed Mentoring – Guidance on one-to-one mentoring

A change to the wording in the code of best practice to *'Mentors should provide an impartial view of the dogs exhibited and not favour or be highly critical of a certain kennel or breeder, ~~no dogs owned or bred by them should be discussed, save in special circumstances.~~'* (deletion struck through).

This change will be particularly beneficial to numerically small breeds where mentoring was problematic as the most experienced and knowledgeable people could not mentor due to having dogs entered.

Observations

Observers

To help increase the pool of observers for some breeds and to provide more opportunities for observations, Group judges who have awarded Challenge Certificates (CCs) to the relevant breed at least three times are able to be observers for the breed should they wish to without breed club approval.

Observation criteria for JEP

Some Breed Education Coordinators have faced challenges to find adequate opportunities to organise observations for judges. To address this, an additional opportunity for observation has been agreed. , Observations can now also take place at Group and General Open shows, as well as Breed Club shows (including Special Awards Classes), Breed supported entry classes and Championship shows without CC's for the breed.

There has been concern from BEC's and judges regarding observations where the required number of dogs were entered but did not turn up on the day, resulting in the observation not being able to take place. The decision has been made that should the correct number of dogs be entered and not arrive the observation should still proceed. The observer should note in the comments section of the form whether they believe the judge was of sufficient capability to continue. Additionally, observers should have a conversation with the judge following the appointment to further assess the judge's level of understanding of the breed. The forms will be updated to reflect this change.

In exceptional circumstances which must be approved prior to the observation taking place, mock classes would be allowed on a trial basis, these would be approved on a

case-by-case basis by Judges Committee. BEC's should ask the office for approval for a mock class observation to take place explaining the exceptional circumstances.

Level 5 and 6 Criteria - Group and Best in Show Judges

Judges applying to be approved for Groups and Best in Show route must have successfully passed the Eye for a Dog Assessment.

The **MINIMUM** criteria for eligibility to be considered for approval to judge a **group** are that nominees must have awarded Challenge Certificates to a minimum of twenty (20) percent of the breeds currently allocated Challenge Certificates in the group including at least one of the six breeds with the currently recorded highest breed entries in the group at General Championship Shows. The requirements for each group appear at the end of this release.

The minimum eligibility criteria for approval to judge **Best in Show** are to have previously judged at least one group and to have awarded Challenge Certificates to at least one breed from two other groups. Judges will also be expected to have adequate experience in judging across all groups.

Policy Judges

The criteria for policy judges has been amended to state that they must have **awarded** CCs in at least 75% of eligible breeds within the group, to have judged the group and have passed the Eye for a Dog assessment.

Grandfathering

The cut-off date for Grandfathering applications for breeds will be as previously announced 31 December 2025, no grandfathering applications will be accepted after this date.

Judges should also note that with immediate effect they are required to be on at least 50% of breed club A3 lists for the breed, and not just one A3 list. It is appreciated that in some breeds multiple breed clubs have different A3 list criteria, The Kennel Club has recently written to clubs encouraging them to bring their criteria in line with The Kennel Club criteria and run more hands-on assessments to give judges more opportunities to meet criteria.

Grandfathering applications for Group and Best in Shows judges will cease as the JEP system for these levels is now in place, so judges have the option of submitting a traditional questionnaire for an appointment or following JEP.

End of transition to JEP – Submission of Traditional/A2 Nominations

The Kennel Club Judges department will continue to accept nominations via the traditional route (questionnaires, and A2 questionnaires) until 31 December 2025 for shows up to 31 December 2027. It was confirmed that any nominations from 1 January 2028 onwards must be for preapproved judges (either previously approved through the traditional route or approved Level 4 judges through JEP).

Breed Education Coordinators

Following an initial proposal from the Breeds Liaison Council a three-year term of office for Breed Education Coordinators (BECs) will start on 1 January 2025 for all breeds. This will bring the role in line with other Kennel Club volunteer roles. If a BEC resigned mid-term, a replacement BEC will be appointed for the remainder of the term of office. BEC's currently in office who have the support of Breed Clubs and wish to continue in the role will begin their 3-year term of office on 1 January 2025, The Kennel Club will assume the current BEC's will remain in place unless notified otherwise.

The process for nomination will be advised to breed clubs in due course.

ENDS

Appendix 1

Approval for Groups

- **Hound Group** – 4 breeds (incl. 1 of Afghan Hound, Basset Hounds, Beagle, Dachshunds, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Whippet).
- **Gundog Group** – 6 breeds (incl. 1 of Retriever (Golden), Retriever (Labrador), Spaniel (Cocker), Irish Setter, Retriever (Flat Coated), Pointer
 - **Terrier Group** – 5 breeds (incl. 1 of Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Border Terrier, Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, Cairn Terrier, Bedlington Terrier, Bull Terriers, Irish Terrier)
 - **Utility Group** – 4 breeds (incl. 1 of Bulldog, Dalmatian, French Bulldog, Tibetan Terrier, Poodles, Tibetan Spaniel).

- **Working Group** – 3 breeds (incl. 1 of Newfoundland, Boxer, Dobermann, Great Dane, Rottweiler, Siberian Husky).
- **Pastoral Group** – 4 breeds (incl. 1 of Bearded Collie, Border Collie, Collie (Rough), German Shepherd Dog, Shetland Sheepdog, Samoyed).
- **Toy Group** – 4 breeds (incl. 1 of Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Chihuahuas, Papillon, Japanese Chin, Pomeranian, Pug).

Note 1 – *For each group the 5-year average from 2023 will be used to determine the top 6 numerical breeds in each group*

Note 2 - *The Judges Committee will take into account the diversity and judging tiers of the previously approved breeds together with the number of dogs judged in the breeds for which the judge is not yet approved.*

Summary of Changes

Mentoring

- Group judges who have awarded CC's twice in a breed can be mentors without Breed Club approval
- Two out of three mentoring sessions must indicate that the judge has sufficient knowledge to progress to observation
- Mentors can discuss dogs bred or owned by them during one-to-one mentoring

Observations

- Group judges who have awarded CC's three times in a breed can be observers without Breed Club approval
- Observations can take place at General Open Shows
- Observations can go ahead if the required number of dogs are entered but not present on the day with the observer noting on the form that the judge was of sufficient capability to continue
- Mock classes can be used during a trial period where exceptional circumstances exist, and this has been approved in advance by Judges committee

Criteria for Level 5 and 6 judges

- Addition of passing the Eye for a Dog assessment

JEP Policy Judges

- Amended to state that a judge will have awarded CCs in at least 75% of eligible breeds within the group, to have judged the group and have passed the Eye for a Dog assessment

Grandfathering

- Grandfathering will end on 31 December 2025 with no applications accepted after this date
- Judges must now be present on at least 50% of Breed Clubs' A3 lists
- Grandfathering for groups and Best in Show to cease immediately

End of transition to JEP – Submission of traditional/A2 nominations

- Traditional nominations will be accepted until 31 December 2025 for shows up to 31 December 2027. From 1 January 2026 only preapproved judges will be accepted

Breed Education Coordinators

- From 1 January 2025 Breed Education Coordinators for all breeds will have a three-year term of office