

Some frequently asked questions answered ...

Why join the Kennel Club Scheme?

The Kennel Club, over the last few years, has looked into the issues surrounding dog training, with concerns that anyone can set up a dog club or service without qualifications, and give training and behavioural advice as an 'expert', to a 'blissfully' unaware general public. Several organisations have formed over time, all trying to address standards and give educational guidance to certificate their members. This scheme complements others, but goes further in unifying all aspects of knowledge and experience in the world of dogs. It oversees personal development and recognises each member as an individual in the role they wish to play.

What is it all about?

This is the first really comprehensive scheme that, in its flexibility, allows anyone who is instructing or advising others, at any level, to join, whatever their interest in dogs. A primary aim of the scheme is to set a national standard to safeguard the public, but it also aims to guide its members in their search for knowledge and experience, encompassing a wealth of information and sharing ideas for improving the future of dog training and behavioural advice.

... the beginning

The Kennel Club launched this Scheme as a 'pilot' in March 2001 and within four months, 500 responded becoming our 'founder members'. During the following three years, information was circulated for comment to the 500, plus another 200 'on-hold'. Having completed the educational guidance pack, the scheme formally launched in March 2004, with the assessment details still to finalise.

How does it work?

You are credited with points according to your personal level of understanding of issues relating to dog training, behaviour and welfare. All members agree to be bound by a Code of Practice and, being recognised for individual levels of expertise, are registered on a database for public / professional / membership referral.

It is a modular programme - with common core subjects, and optional areas of diversity. It lists topics (syllabus) for you to credit yourself with points for everything that you know and do. It encourages you to keep up-to-date or find out more by talking and listening to others, reading, watching and doing; allowing development in your own time, in any way you choose. The programme is divided into three main sections but it links applied knowledge (section A) and background experience (section B) to practical instructing / coaching (section C) - giving you the opportunity to show that you have a working understanding of each topic

How do I join?

You fill in a registration form that gives a general guide to you and your involvement(s) with dogs and instructing. You pay a registration fee as a hobby (club / voluntary) or business (ie it is taxable income and fees submitted for tax relief), sign to declare that you accept the guidance given by the Code of Practice for Instructors, and complete your points profile. Once provisional points are credited, you will be recorded on our database as a 'student member' (if under 3 yrs instructing and / or less than 1000 pts) or non-accredited 'member' (if instructing over 3 yrs and 1000 pts). Everyone who remains in good standing is welcome, without discrimination, becoming part of this network of like-minded people. This network aims to serve others,

helping them to enjoy their dogs through education, training and responsible ownership, in the dogs' best interest.

... Code of Practice?

This Code, simply expects you to be honest and concerned about the services you personally offer. It will give the public confidence as they can contact the Kennel Club to confirm your details. It gives us confidence, as you are showing that you are prepared to be a) bound by the Code and b) checked / assessed at the level you set for yourself.

How do I get my points?

You work your way through an APL (Assessment of Prior Learning) form by self-assessment, allocating yourself points; giving you (and us) a detailed profile right from the start.

What is 'prior learning'?

This is the knowledge that you have gained through previous education and life-long experiences - it means that you do not start from scratch, with nothing. It gets you to look at yourself and what you know already (most are surprised at just how much they do know, and are encouraged to top up in areas where they consider they are weak). The number of points you claim for each topic is two-fold - depth of knowledge ('LUK' score) and amount of hands-on experience ('JEL' score).

.... 'LUK' score ?

'LUK' stands for 'Level of Underpinning Knowledge'. Points on a scale of 0-10 are credited according to how well you know each subject. This gives you a LUK score

....and 'JEL' score ?

'JEL' stands for 'Justify Experience Level'. This credits you with points to justify increasing levels of knowledge and experience, gained over many years involvement and exposure. This is again related to a scale of 0-10 to give you a JEL score. Many are surprised at just how much they have 'picked up' over the years, when it is put into perspective, and this score emphasises this.

... allocating points?

The JEL score is straightforward - by using a chart, you match the number of years that you have spent gaining your level of knowledge of each subject. The LUK score is about matching yourself against a series of statements (scale 0-10) on the charts, where: 0 = no knowledge; lower band (1-3 pts) practical knowledge picked up owning and working around dogs; middle band (4-6 pts) might be claimed by a well-read 'enthusiast'; higher band (7-9 pts) shows deeper levels of technical or more scientific study, research and involvements; 10 (top) reflects an 'expert'.

... is that too much for me?

No! ... this Scheme is not about having deep levels of knowledge, it is about having sufficient 'understanding' for the role you wish to play, to give you confidence, being able to apply it to help others in a practical way. Full 'Accreditation' is aimed at an enthusiast, gaining a score of 5 for each topic, and over five years of 'hands-on' instructing experience.

Working together

Everyone is individually recognised for their own levels of knowledge and experience across the Scheme. The Scheme encourages those with high levels of knowledge to share it, to help others with their 'understanding', and those with experience to share it, to help others to apply that knowledge in practice. Members should feel able to work together, visit, compare, discuss and learn from each other, as a benefit of a membership scheme.

Self-assessment - I can say anything!

Not exactly! There is no point in being dishonest, as you will not benefit fully from the scheme. It is better to err on the side of caution, as you will be expected to live up to the level that you have claimed. It is hoped that this will encourage you to develop

further in the areas where your score is low. You will be able to adjust your scores annually or when you submit your modules for assessment.

Why points?

The points give you (and us) a detailed profile and information about yourself (a formative assessment). Once you have scored yourself, you set about showing us (justifying) why you have given yourself the score that you have claimed (NB the higher the score, the greater the justification). You will collect 'evidence' to support or increase your score and build a portfolio with CV style statements to summarise it. Your aim is to get the evidence to balance your score.

.... 'summary' of 'evidence'?

Let's first look at what is meant by 'evidence' - this is the proof of experience (certificates, rosettes, records, references, videos, tapes, photographs, tickets, seminar / lecture notes, books you've read, discussion groups, achievement records, life's events, involvements, help at club / shows, and so on) ... but you will not be sending this to us ... it is not practical to send in 60 rosettes, 140 certificates, reams of notes, etc. So you will write a brief report (summary) to list and tell us what relevant evidence you have, how you got it, how much time was involved, to show application and understanding. (NB It is the job of the Assessor to check the actual 'evidence' when they come out to visit you, during the final oral and practical assessment)

Ok, what is an 'element'?

The Scheme is divided into 3 main Sections, which are subdivided into Modules. Each module is divided into elements, each of which looks at specific topics.

How do I produce evidence?

The first way to produce evidence is to research the answers to the questions set within each element. Questions are designed to be thought-provoking and to guide you into band two (4-6 points). The level you reach is up to you, dependent on your own research, knowledge, study and experience.

Secondly, make notes on personal dog-related experiences, that may have some relevance to the topic, for example, you may have owned a diabetic dog and spent a large amount of time asking questions and reading about it, or you may have studied nutrition to a high level, or you may have picked up and tried training tips from people you have met.

Thirdly, sort out and file records, photographs, certificates, and for example, ask others to provide you with a witness statement if they have seen you achieve a task, ask for feedback on your teaching, make notes of and at meetings to show you were actively listening, and make notes on books you have read or videos or documentaries you have seen.

And finally, you may wish to take a formal route and undertake study, assignments and projects, through the many college / correspondence courses, to have your work structured and graded to a set level. 'Course Providers' will be able to help you produce the evidence of your learning, providing certificates in summary.

Get organised

Separate your portfolio using section, module and element headings, make notes as you go along and as you remember details and relevant events

What if I didn't keep records?

You will have a reason to in the future, so just do your best. There's has to be a certain amount of trust and you will be able, at least, to tell us a bit about it.

When do I hand in my portfolio?

You do not hand in your portfolio ... only summary sheets are sent in when ready, which list life skills and the things that you have compiled as your portfolio. Each module is separately assessed and Assessors will visit and look through your portfolio evidence. A complete set of summary sheets are required when full, advanced or specialist 'accreditation' is applied for - at

the levels you set by your claimed scores - at or over the minimums set by the scheme, across each section.

How do I get started?

Once registered and allocated a membership number, and issued with the educational guidance pack. 'Members' should start writing up using the summary templates. 'Students' (under three years), will continue to build experience and gain knowledge by researching the topics within the modules, collating details, to satisfy and / or increase your scores.

What is in the modules?

Section A – Applied Knowledge

At first you may think that this section is 'academic', but for all topics we expect an applied understanding to be illustrated by hands-on experiences. The modules cover all the general issues surrounding dog ownership and aspects of learning.

Section B – Background Experience

This is where you say that you are not JUST an Instructor, but that you are a knowledgeable dog person. In this section, we are looking at your personal involvement with dogs, any aspect that has given you knowledge and experience about dogs, their development, relationships, management and training. There is a long list from which to choose, including dog ownership, dog sports, hobbies; breed or job-related activities. 'Responsible Dog Ownership' is compulsory, as are activities to show your 'instructing' experience and your handling and training skills.

Section C – Coaching (Practical Instructing)

The modules look at the - who, what, why, where and how of Instructing (teaching, demonstrating, advising and counselling). It is based on all your experiences, what you do, the way you work or would ideally like to, your trials and hands-on learning experiences. This section sets the format for the final practical assessment.

NB All sections are dependent on each other, they complement, inter-relate and overlap. Section 'A' ensures the knowledge; 'B' ensures the experience and 'C' ensures the skills to give others understanding.

Writing up the modules

For each module, you write, preferably type, an overview of your learning experiences, using summary templates, giving a few notes under each of the element justifying your LUK (level achieved) score and your JEL (time involved) score. Modules can be compiled in your portfolio and written up as you go along - researching, collecting and creating 'evidence' - adding to it and continually updating it until needed, until your application for 'accreditation'.

Why is 'Responsible Dog Ownership' compulsory?

.... Two reasons - one, it is an educational requirement to have at least one module in section B that is common to all applicants. Secondly, it fulfils one of the main aims of the scheme to promote it. It looks at the wider issues involved as it affects every person in the community. Those living with dogs must take a responsible attitude, to train their dog for everyday life, no matter what other activity they choose to follow. All Scheme members will be seen to be spreading the word to reduce anti-dog feelings. Virtually all members are dog owners; others, by nature of the Scheme, have significant contact with those that are.

Do I need a computer, email or access to the web?

This is not a requirement on our part. The Scheme is flexible, it can be completed in many ways and we will do our best to accommodate all. Information is available from a variety of sources and many libraries offer Internet access. There is huge data-base potential in the scheme, to recognise and publicise levels of expertise within the membership, the formation of interest groups and improved access to information.

Are there exams?

There are no written examinations. Your portfolio will be assessed by Kennel Club appointed Assessor(s) to ensure

sufficient evidence has been given to match your scores. They will also accompany you, to watch you in your usual instructing session, for your final full practical and oral assessment.

Oral & Practical Assessment?

Kennel Club appointed Assessor(s) will visit you, their job is to check the 'evidence' as described in your portfolio and ask you questions based on it. They will also observe and question you in your 'instructing' role, to ensure that you meet the criteria set by the scheme, at the level you set by your score.

You talk about 'criteria' ...

Yes, this is simply targets / standards, that can be set and proven, just like in the Good Citizen Dog Scheme - you either achieve a one minute down stay or you don't ... so, you either have 1000 points or you don't, you either succeed in your teaching, explanation or demonstration or you don't, you either have control of your class or you don't, you either enjoy it or you don't!

Instructing experience?

This is your total instructing time - all your experience, not just that gained since enrolling on the scheme. Many members will enrol, already having a wealth of experience, so they will be able to apply for 'accreditation' as soon as they complete their portfolio.

How are membership levels noted?

'Accredited' and 'Advanced' Members will be entitled to use the initials KCAI & KCAI.Adv. respectively; with current instructing specialisms (with 70+ pts) indicated in brackets. Others will write (in full) Student Member / Non-accredited Member of the Kennel Club Accreditation Scheme for Instructors in Dog Training and Canine Behaviour, working towards accreditation.

What is the Specialist award?

There is a specialist accreditation for those with high levels of both instructing experience and handling skills, but limited very specifically to a single competitive or working activity at high levels of achievement.

How does that affect points?

Each award needs all A & C modules with increasing scores. Section 'B' requirements are outlined below, with the compulsory modules included. 'Accreditation' award requires 300 pts in at least 5 'B' modules, with the instructing module having a score of 70 or more. 'Specialist and Advanced Accreditation' are available, but under discussion and trial currently.

It seems so complicated!

Agreed, it is quite challenging, but it is also quite rewarding to work through it. It does work well and realistically assesses everybody as an individual in their own right, treating everyone equally and fairly, allowing membership to people from a vast variety of backgrounds, in any area of the canine world.

All the public will want to know -

Is simply that those who are entitled to use initials KCAI after their names have been assessed by KC Approved Assessors, and are accredited for the part they play within the network. All members have agreed to be bound by the Code of Practice for Instructors, so as far as the public is concerned, they can check on members details, especially if they are not satisfied with the service provided or the way they or their dogs are treated.

There's a lot of jargon ...

Whenever you start something new, you will need to get used to new words, or ones that mean something different in the new context. It doesn't take long to become familiar with the Scheme and its processes.

Equal Opportunities

We will do our best to ensure that all members are treated equally and that no one is disadvantaged by the scheme - just contact the Office.

What is mentoring / a Mentor ?

All members, who understand the scheme and know what is expected, will naturally help others in a mentoring role, and we are sure this will happen more and more as the Scheme becomes established. Senior Instructors will be able to 'mentor' their assistants and the Scheme encourages peer discussion groups for mutual benefit. Some members may wish to take this role on more formally and may apply to be added to a list of approved 'Mentors' in due course.

What are the stages again?

1. First, become a member - fill out the registration form, send it in with the correct registration fee.
2. Receive introductory / reference notes; prepare for, and complete, the self-assessment profile (with a 'mentor' if necessary) to claim your provisional points.
3. Receive the portfolio pack and be registered as a Student Member if you have less than 1000 points and / or less than 3 years Instructing experience. If over, you will be asked to supply a suitable reference, to be registered as a non-accredited Member.
4. Read through all the modules and examples to be sure that you understand exactly what is expected, ring the office or a 'mentor' if you are confused over anything at this stage.
5. Build a portfolio by listing, creating and collating evidence in support of the scores you are claiming
6. With sufficient points, and over 5 years instructing experience, having submitted all the required modules, apply for full oral and practical assessment in your chosen activity(ies), at your chosen level.
7. NB - An annual CPD return (continued professional development) will be required by all members, at all grades, to show increased scores, or to give details of how you have increased your experience and / or updated your knowledge.

What's the Kennel Club's part in this?

- o The plan is entirely in your hands, but we are always available to guide you and advise you.
- o We will keep a record of your points, recognise and encourage your personal development. You may update your points at anytime and we will record your achievements. Continual Professional Development (CPD) will be supported as a requirement of the scheme.
- o We will produce a regular newsletter, and develop the website for dissemination of information.
- o We will strive to educate all those involved with guiding aspects of dog ownership, training and behaviour, to ensure understanding, handling skills and respect that works in the dog's best interest.
- o We will bring your attention to issues of legal and professional aspects of instructing and advising.
- o We will encourage your contact with others, and back to the Scheme for its continual improvement.
- o We will promote the 'network' to encourage referral, communication and respect for fellow members; working together to ensure that the advice given to dog owners is appropriate and services are suitable.
- o We will progress the scheme, adapt and modify it, keep it flexible and in line with changing times, suitable for the prestige of national recognition.
- o We will promote and maintain credibility for the scheme in the public eye.
- o We will keep you (either personally or through your 'club') on a database for referral.
- o We will use the Scheme to raise the profile of our members and their services, for their contribution as part of the front line in canine welfare for the dog-owning public.
- o We will do our best to accommodate all, and consider options to ensure that no member is disadvantaged by the Scheme in any way.
- o We will maintain a register of Course Providers, who support the Scheme and can give appropriate advice on your needs for portfolio evidence.
- o We will do our best to administer the Scheme in consultation with, and for, its Members.