

Proposal for revisions to the KC Agility Grading Structure

Background

1. At the meeting of the Agility Liaison Council on 18th January 2018, two options for a change in the structure were discussed at length. This paper consolidates these discussions and makes a proposal for changes to be implemented on 1st January 2019.

Rationale for proposals

2. Dogs are moving up the grades too quickly and end up in G6 or G7, unprepared and not ready to compete at the required standard. Further details on these issues can be found in the Grading Panel's papers for ALC meeting on 19th January and 13th July 2017.
3. In particular dogs have moved up the grades too quickly because:
 - Very small numbers in some classes, sometimes due to more than one show being held with a region on the same day.
 - A lot more graded classes.
 - Many shows offering a large number of wins to a relatively small number of dogs – primarily by grading small classes rather than combining them
 - Great variability in course times – some very long course times being set especially in the low grades.
 - A lot more long weekend and week shows
 - Great variability in numbers of dogs in each height categories – dogs in Small and Medium will move up grades faster than Large simple on the basis of numbers.
 - More classes to enter per day.
 - G1-7 graded classes do not offer enough challenges for all the grades or the time that is set is too lenient.
4. A weighted progression system would resolve some of these problems by balancing out the variability in class size. However to be effective it would require a central database which will not be available for at least a further two years. A weighted system may also be considered divisive by competitors because of the variability in the numbers between height categories.
5. The grading panel have therefore put together a simple and practical proposal for changes to the grading system that will address many of the problems. This new system will make significant inroads to addressing the problems identified.
6. The changes will:
 - Make agility wins required at all levels.
 - Require more wins at all levels to progress through the grades. This should have the effect of slowing progression.
 - Remove the consideration of the owner in grading a dog.
 - Remove the current Grade 2 from the system. This is an underused grade and under the new system dogs will spend longer in Grade 1. As a result of this grades have been renumbered.
 - Make the use of the course time matrix a requirement. The matrix gives a range so that the judge may set a course time within this range that takes into account the

complexity of the course, the range of grades competing and ground and weather conditions

- Restrict shows to offering no more than four standard (progression) classes per dog/grade per day.
- Prevent grading classes from covering more than three grades. Classes for four or more grades will need to be combined.
- Allow progression on agility Warrant point up to the new Grade 3, but require a minimum of 50 points to be in agility.

7. These changes to the grading system will not resolve the disparity between different heights. This is caused by the great variation in numbers of dogs between Small and Medium and Large. This can only be improved by changing the height categories so that there is a more even distribution of dogs between heights.
8. This does not cover any increased eligibility for Championship classes which will be considered separately at a later date if it is still considered necessary.
9. A full review of the course time matrix is proposed. This should look at the speeds used across different heights and grades and review current data from shows. The recent revision of the matrix (November 2017) extended the matrix to allow for longer course lengths.

Proposed rule changes

To implement these changes the following rule changes are proposed. All these changes would come in concurrently on 1st January 2019.

10. New regulation H (1) (A) 6

A maximum of four standard classes may be scheduled for any dog/grade combination on an individual day of competition. Any number of special classes may be scheduled.

(Insertion in bold/italics)

(All subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

11. H (1) (A) 6

To

Class Structure. A Class may either be held as a Graded Class or a Combined Class. A Graded Class may be scheduled for ~~one or more~~ ***up to a maximum of three*** consecutive Grades with separate results and awards issued for each grade. The eligibility for a Graded Class is detailed below. A Combined Class may be scheduled for more than one consecutive grade with one overall set of results. A Combined Class is open to any combination of dog and handler that qualifies for any of the Grades in that class.

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12. H (1) (A) 9

To

Progression. ~~Progression from each Grade will require one Agility win or three Jumping wins in standard classes at that grade, at either Full Height or the Lower Height Option, except that progression from Grade 5 will require 3 wins at Grade 5, one of which must be an agility class. Progression from Grade 6 will require 4 wins at Grade 6, two of which must be agility classes. Results from Combined Classes will only count towards progression from the dog's current grade.~~

Progression from Grade 1 will require the dog or handler to have won two first places, one of which must be in an agility class. Progression from Grade 2 will require the dog to have won two first places, one of which must be in an agility class. Progression from Grade 3 will require the dog to have won three first places, two of which must be in an agility class. Progression from Grade 4 will require the dog to have won four first places, two of which must be in agility classes. Progression from Grade 5 will require the dog to have won five first places, three of which must be in agility classes. Results from Combined Classes will only count towards progression from the dog's current grade. To count for progression wins must be gained in standard classes at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows.

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13. H (1) (A) 10

To

Points Progression. At the handler's discretion a dog may progress up to ~~Grade 4~~ **Grade 3** by winning 100 points at each grade, using the Agility Warrant points scheme, Regulation K3.c refers. ~~except that there is no requirement for a minimum number of agility points.~~ **A minimum of 50 points must be gained in Agility classes in the relevant grade.** If this method of progression is selected, the handler must ensure the Show Secretary signs the dog's Agility Record Book at the first show entered at the higher grade. There is no time limit on this progression, however, once a dog has progressed, it cannot return to a previous grade.

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14. H (1) (A) 11

To

Standard Classes Only first prizes and points gained in standard classes at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows may be used for progression through the classes. (A dog is only eligible for one grade). In defining the eligibility of the ~~owner or~~ handler for Grade 1, the ~~three jumping~~ **two** wins and points progression referred to in the definition apply only to one dog and not an accumulation of dogs.

a. Grade 1 (Elementary) ~~For owners, handlers or dogs which have not gained a first place in an Agility Class or three first places in Jumping Classes at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows. N.B. Owners, handlers or dogs previously qualified out of Grade 1, (Elementary) are not eligible for this class.~~ **Open to dogs and handlers which have NOT gained a minimum of two first places at Grade 1 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, at least one of which must be gained in an agility (not jumping) class. N.B. Handlers and dogs previously qualified out of Grade 1 are not eligible for this class.**

b. Grade 2 (Starters) ~~Open to dogs which are not eligible for Grades 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and have not gained a first place in an Agility Class or three first places in Jumping Classes at Grade 2 at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows, or elected to progress on points from Grade 1. N.B. Owners, handlers or dogs previously qualified out of Grade 2 (Starters) are not eligible for this class.~~ **Open to dogs which are not eligible for Grade 1 or have elected to progress on points from Grade 1 and are not eligible for Grade 3, 4, 5 or 6.**

c. Grade 3 (Graduate) ~~Open to dogs which are not eligible for Grade 1 or 2 or have elected to progress on points from Grade 2 at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows and dogs which are not eligible for Grade 4, 5, 6 or 7.~~ ***Open to dogs which have gained a minimum of two first places at Grade 2 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, 1 first place must be gained in Agility (not jumping classes), or have elected to progress on points from Grade 2.***

d. Grade 4 (Novice) ~~Open to dogs which have gained a first place in an Agility Class or three first places in Jumping Classes at Grade 3 or elected to progress on points from Grade 3 at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows and are not eligible for Grade 3, 5, 6 or 7.~~ ***Open to dogs which have gained a minimum of three first places at Grade 3 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, 2 first places must be gained in Agility (not jumping) classes***

e. Grade 5 (Intermediate) ~~Open to dogs which have gained a first place in an Agility Class or three 21 H(1)(A) first places in Jumping Classes at Grade 4 at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows and are not eligible for Grade 3, 4, 6 or 7.~~ ***Open to dogs which have gained a minimum of four first places at Grade 4 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, 2 first places must be gained in Agility (not jumping) classes***

f. Grade 6 (Senior) ~~Open to dogs which have gained a minimum of 3 first places at Grade 5 at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows, 1 first place must be gained in an Agility (not Jumping) Class, and are not eligible for Grade 3, 4, 5 or 7.~~ ***Open to dogs which have gained a minimum of five first places at Grade 5 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, 3 first places must be gained in Agility (not jumping) classes***

g. Grade 7 (Advanced) ~~Open to dogs which have gained a minimum of 4 first places at Grade 6 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, 2 first places must be gained in Agility (not Jumping) Classes.~~

h. Championship Class. Open to dogs having qualified to compete in **Grade 6** ~~Grade 7~~ which have had 4 wins at Full Height in either Grade 6 or Grade 7, at least 2 of which must be gained in agility classes. To consist of 2 qualifying rounds of Standard Kennel Club Classes, 1 Agility Class and 1 Jumping Class and a final round of Agility to be held at the same Show
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15. H (1) (B) 1 (4)

To

Standard Class Course Time — A set time for each course shall be calculated by the judge, ~~who shall take into account the course length, the height category of the dogs competing, and the grade or grades of the dogs competing in the relevant class, together with any other relevant factors.~~ The course length must be measured by the judge using a commercially available measuring wheel, using the straight line distance between obstacle centres method. **Using this course length the course time will be calculated from the Kennel Club Course Time Matrix.** The set time shall be stated by the judge before judging commences.

Transition to the new grading structure

16. There will need to be a transition from the current grading system to the new grading system. This will be applied to all dogs at midnight on 31st December 2018.

Current Grade Until 31.12.18	New Grade From 01.01.19
1	1
2	2
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7	6

17. Dogs who already had wins towards the next grade will retain these wins when they move to their new grade. So, for example, a dog currently in Grade 5 who has one Agility win towards Grade 6 will now be in Grade 4 and will have one Agility win towards Grade 5.
18. From 01.01.19 all dogs new to competing will start in Grade 2, unless they are run by a beginner handler who is eligible for Grade 1. Dogs and handlers that have already competed in Grade 2 will remain in Grade 2 even if they were not eligible for Grade One due to the ownership of the dog.

Future consideration of changes to licensing arrangements for Agility Shows.

19. One of the issues affecting the size of classes is the number of shows held on one day in a close proximity. Currently there are no restrictions on how many licenses are issued within any area on one day (with the exception of Scotland where only one agility show is licenced on any day).
20. The Grading Panel would like The Kennel Club to consider altering the procedures for licensing agility shows with the intent of restricting the number of shows on any date within a given radius as this is causing a major problem in terms of several small shows competing for business and therefore offering wins to very low number of dogs.
21. This is currently not possible due to the management systems used with The Kennel Club for issuing licences. However this is being reviewed and it may be possible to achieve this in the medium term (3-4 years)
22. .ALC would like this aspect to be considered in the future so restrictions might be placed. For example this might not allow a show to be held within 30 miles radius of another licensed show on the same day. This distance would be calculated using the venue post code and as the crow flies. This would only apply to Championship, Premier and Open shows and not limited shows or matches.
23. To make this practical it is proposed that registered clubs only would be able to apply for licences 18 months or more in advance of the show date. Listed clubs could only apply for shows 6-18 months in advance of the show date. This would give a slight preference to registered clubs (who will be organising championship and premier shows) but still enable listed clubs to confirm date at least a year in advance.