



## **Qualifications and skill of agility judges - Discussion paper**

This discussion paper covers three aspects affecting Agility Judges – knowledge and experience before starting to judge, different categories of judges and the support and ongoing assessment of judges.

### **Minimum standard of previous experience for Agility Judges**

Currently the only requirement for new agility judges is that they have passed the Agility Judges examination on the Kennel Club Academy and attended an Agility Judges Seminar and passed the accompanying assessment.

There is no requirement for any other experience or knowledge before becoming a judge. This means that some of the people becoming judges have very limited knowledge of Kennel Club agility competitions, how ring parties work or knowledge of course design across different grades or heights. Although the Kennel Club judging course covers much of this material there is a need for judges to have substantial experience BEFORE they start judging. Some of the judges who have qualified do not have adequate experience to prepare them to be able to set a good range of courses, run a ring and cope with the demands of judging.

We have reviewed the requirement for judges in other established and new canine activities and considered the approaches used to identify potential criteria for agility judges. A brief summary of those looked at is included in the Annex to this paper.

In most other activities judges are required to have competitive experience, normally at the level they are required to judge. Agility is the exception in that people can become qualified to judge never having competed before.

We would therefore like to make additional criteria for new Agility Judges to ensure that they have relevant practical experience before starting on their Kennel Club Agility Judging career.

### **Categories of Judges**

In agility we only have two types of judges – Judges and Championships judges. This means that currently a newly qualified judge can judge at any level of competition (apart from Championship classes) from their first appointment. Inexperienced judges have been appointed to judge Premier classes. As well as potentially affecting the standard of competition this can be very difficult for the newly qualified judge to cope with and, anecdotally, inexperienced judges have been put off due to the lack of support and opportunity to develop experience before taking on bigger challenges.

Other disciplines normally have a tiered approach to judging, with newly qualified judges being restricted to certain levels until they have more judging experiences or more competitive experience. We would like to see Agility adopt a similar approach and are suggesting four categories of judge - Novice, Open, Premier and Championship.

We have not looked at the criteria for Championship level judges as we believe that the standard set and assessment proves for Agility Championship judges is working well.



## Support, mentoring and development

By 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 all Agility Judges have to refresh their knowledge by passing the Kennel Club Rules and Regulations online exam every 5 years. Apart from this there is currently no requirement for ongoing assessment or development.

The mentoring scheme for new judges is currently optional and so some judges are starting to judge with no support whatsoever.

We are recommending that Mentoring could become compulsory for new judges undertaking their first 3 judging appointments. We are aware that there are some problems with the current mechanism for securing mentors and would like to see this system revised to make it easier for new judges to find mentors.

It is also clear that judges need ongoing support and advice to ensure they are keeping up with the application of changes in rules and we would like to see some ongoing development opportunities for judges. Judges Trainers could be asked, in addition to training for new judges, to provide workshops open to all judges to keep up to date with changes in rules and regulations, seek support on judging issues and discuss matter such as course design. A requirement for Premier and Championship judges to attend such a workshop every three years could be brought in to ensure judges are up to date and provided with support. Such workshops could be held at various locations including being evening events at shows.

## New Judging Framework

These proposed elements would make for a new judging framework for agility judges.

The judging framework would be hierarchical – new judges all enter at the lowest level and will need to gain experience at each level before being eligible to move up. We would propose that “grandfather rights” for existing judges are retained so these new criteria only apply to those applying to be judges for the first time. Existing Championship judges retain their Championship status, all other existing judges are allocated Open Judge status, with the ability to apply for Premier Judge status immediately (if they meet the new criteria).

There are three types of previous experience that could be applicable to new judges

### 1. Experience of competing at Kennel Club Open and Championship Agility Shows

This criterion would prove that the candidate has experience of competing at different grades and has handled a dog well enough to progress between grades in recent years.

### 2. Experience of judging agility at Kennel Club Limited shows, club matches and non Kennel Club licensed events.

This might include club competitions, limited shows and matches, unlicensed shows or agility competitions run by other organisations in recent years. The criteria could take into account the number of judging appointment the candidate has undertaken, the number of dogs judge, the range of different heights and grades of dogs.

### 3. Experience of working in different roles at Kennel Club licensed agility shows.

To be able to judge and take responsibility for a ring it is essential to have a broad understanding of the different roles of officials at agility shows, how a show works, the incident reporting systems, functioning of ring parties and management of results. This is best achieved by working as part of the team running an agility show

These criteria could be assessed by judge trainers. The requirement for attending the Judges Practical Workshops would remain as having passed the online exam but Judges trainers would not pass candidates



unless they were able to bring evidence of their previous experience to the weekend. Those attending the workshop without adequate experience would not be able to become judges and would be required to repeat the workshop when they had adequate experience if they wanted to go on and judge.

A mechanism would need to be devised to allow for recording relevant experience – this could be done by adding appropriate sections to the Judges record book. A section would also allow judges to record relevant competing experience.

The table below gives an example of what the criteria at each level might be.

The proposed implementation dates for these new requirements would be from 2023.

### **Next steps**

Following consultation on this paper the ALC Judges panel will discuss the proposal with the Activities Judges Sub - Group with a view to bringing a proposal to the next ALC meeting for approval.

**Jackie Gardn**



	Knowledge	Experience		
		Show Management	Competing	Judging
<b>Novice Judge</b> – can judge at limited agility shows and club matches	Completed and passed the Kennel Club Academy Agility Judges Examination within the last 5 years *		None required	None required
<b>Open Judge</b> – can judges at Kennel Club Open and Premier Shows, but cannot judges Championship classes or Kennel Club Qualifiers.	Attended the agility judges' seminar and passed the accompanying assessment	have completed six full days working at a Kennel Club Open or Championship agility show in a key role within the last 3 years. These could include Show Manager, Show secretary, Scribe, Scorer or and Ring Manager.	have competed at Kennel Club Open or Championship shows and have won at least one dog up from grade 3 (or a higher grade) in the last 5 years.	have judged at least 500 dogs OR 3 or more heights and at all standards at shows in the last 5 years (shows may be Kennel Club limited shows or club matches or UKA shows)
<b>Premier Judge</b> - can judges at Kennel Club Open and Premier Shows, including Kennel Club Qualifiers but cannot judge Kennel Club Championship classes or at Crufts or Discover Dogs.	Attended a CPD workshop in the last 3 years *	have completed six full days working at a Kennel Club Open or Championship agility show in a key role within the last 3 years. These could include Show Manager, Show secretary, Scribe, Scorer or and Ring Manager.	have a minimum of 3 years' experience of competing at Kennel Club licensed agility shows, having competed in at least 20 progression classes during the last three years. All experience must be within the last 5 years. .	have a minimum of 5 years' experience of judging at Kennel Club licensed agility shows and have judged at a minimum of 10 licensed agility shows over the previous 3 years including standard classes in at least 3 height categories.
<b>Championship Judge</b> – can judge all classes at Kennel Club Agility Shows including Championship classes and at Crufts and Discover Dogs	*		have a minimum of 5 years' experience of competing at Kennel Club licensed agility shows and have handled a dog competitively at grade 6 or 7	have a minimum of 5 years' experience of judging at Kennel Club licensed agility shows, have judged at a minimum of 10 licensed agility shows over the previous 3 years including standard classes in each height category which must include grade 7, class size and geographical distribution of judging appointments will be a consideration, and have handled a dog competitively at grade 6 or 7

\* denotes an ongoing commitment to maintaining knowledge of Kennel Club rules and regulations



## Annex B

### Current Criteria for Agility Judges

Before you judge for the first time at a Kennel Club licensed Agility Show you must meet the following criteria:

- You must have completed and passed an Agility Judges examination on the Kennel Club Academy prior to attending a Kennel Club Agility Judges Seminar. The exam consists of a short multiple-choice question paper based only on the materials hosted on the [Kennel Club Academy](#).
- You must also have attended an Agility Judges Seminar and passed the accompanying assessment. The assessment is a straightforward practical assessment of the candidate's judging practice on the same day as the seminar.

### Examples of criteria for judging on other Kennel Club Activities

#### Obedience

Before you can embark on judging at Open or Championship Shows, you must be fully conversant with the Obedience 'G' Regulations and you must meet the following minimum criteria:

- You must satisfy the Show Committee that you have two years' experience judging at a lower level (such as Limited shows, club competitions or companion dog shows);
- You must have won out of Beginners at a Licensed Championship or Open Obedience Show as a handler;
- You must have acted as a Caller or Marker Steward on at least six occasions at Kennel Club Licensed Shows;
- You must also have attended a Kennel Club Obedience Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination (see details below).

**Note:** A judge's first three appointments at Open or Championship shows must be restricted to Novice.

#### Working Trials

Before you are appointed to judge at an Open Working Trial:

- You must have qualified a dog "Excellent" in the Stake you are going to judge, or in a higher Stake.
- For a TD (Tracking Dog) or PD (Patrol Dog) appointment you must have previously judged the nosework section of a lower stake (excluding CD which does not include tracking).
- Prior to judging for the first time you must have attended a Kennel Club Working Trial Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination

#### HWTM

- Judges should have qualified a dog out of starters' class in either Heelwork to Music or Freestyle classes, and
- they should have a minimum of two years' experience competing in standard classes at a minimum of six Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions, and
- they must demonstrate a good knowledge of the sport and a thorough understanding of the rules of the sport, and
- they must have attended a Kennel Club Heelwork To Music Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure Examination. (From 1 January 2016 all



Judges must have attended a Regulations and Judging Procedure seminar every four years since passing the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination. Note: Taking the examination again is not a requirement.)

- Wherever possible, all judges for a class should have competed at the level of that class.
- A Judge's first three appointments for competitions must be restricted to Starters and Novice

## **Rally**

Before judging a Level 1 or Level 2 class at a Rally competition a judge must have:

- Handled a dog and achieved the Level Title for the Level which he or she is judging,
- Must have acted as a scribe steward for a complete standard Rally class on at least two occasions with two different judges,
- Have attended a Kennel Club Rally Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination,
- Have attended a Kennel Club Rally Practical Judging Seminar,
- A judge's first two appointments must be restricted to Level 1 or Level 2.

The next two appointments may be at Level 3. Before judging Level 4 a judge must have undertaken two appointments at Level 3.

Before a judge can judge Level 5 they must have undertaken two appointments at Level 4.

Before judging Level 6 a judge must have carried out two appointments at Level 5.

Judges must ensure that they have scribed at every level they intend to judge