

JUDGES COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

In the Spring the Kennel Club announced a new system for the education, approval and listing of every level of judge, from those who aspire to judge, right through to open show judges and those who go on to award challenge certificates and judge championship show groups, and best in show.

The last major shake-up in the system was back in 1999, when the now familiar KC seminars were introduced, and rules about who could judge what were brought in and clubs were given the responsibility for listing judges.

So why change the system now?

The answer is because of the adverse feedback received from;

Show societies

- Lack of access to available judges therefore having to schedule only a small number of classes which leads to poor entries and restricts which breeds are scheduled which does not attract exhibitors.
- Cannot appoint a lot of breed specialist as entries are too low to make it cost effective.

Exhibitors

- Poor choice of judges, judges selected who have little or no proven interest in the breed, 'same old faces' each year
- Judges appointed who have no real knowledge or experience of the breeds they are to judge.

Judges

- Breed clubs being unnecessarily restrictive on who can take part in its education and unrealistic on the numbers required to progress - this is especially acute in many of the numerically small breeds.
- No clear criteria to progress.

The new proposals have been a few years in the planning. The KC Training Board has overseen the development of the key principles, and I joined the working party in the spring of 2016 when we began the process of adding detailed flesh to the outline and working towards the launch.

The judging framework will be an online system, using the KC Academy and linking into the established website service - 'Find a Judge'. A dedicated full-time KC support desk will also be in place.

Progression is competency based, there is a logical sequence of learning, practising, peer observation and testing with no set number of dogs judged required.

Through a more rigorous training and evaluation system across all levels, and with the introduction of minimum requirements, judging standards will be raised across all shows, thus improving the exhibitor experience and increasing entries.

Such a major scheme as this requires staff with many different skill sets to be involved. A new IT build is required for the system, and this has been awarded by competitive tender. The project group meets regularly at the KC and the scheme is fully programme managed. There is also a Working Party of experience judges who oversee the education content for each of the levels, a senior executive has overall responsibility on the staff side, and I provide a progress report to the Board at each of its meetings.

The Kennel Club is investing over £0.5m in the education and training of judges, this will be a cost to the KC over the first 4 years. After that the scheme is expected to be self-funding, but there is no intention to make money, just cover costs.

The Judges Competency Framework will formally start in January 2019, and run alongside the current system for a three-year transition period, and be fully operational from January 2022. The education will be supported by a network of Breed Education Coordinators who will help facilitate learning.

All judges will be required to remain up to date with their general dog show knowledge by taking a mandatory online exam 'the Requirements of a Dog Show Judge' every five years to remain active.

Breed clubs will remain responsible for providing breed-specific education, and the Framework will also require judges to undergo mentoring and ringside observation. Breed clubs will be required to support this activity and to work with the Kennel Club to facilitate organising breed-specific assessments.

A small pilot scheme involving 14 breed clubs from all seven groups, all five Stud Book bands and non CC breeds is in place, which will enable the Kennel Club to make refinements to its proposals before the Framework comes fully operational. In fact we have already received feedback and some updates have either been agreed or are under discussion.

Clubs will no longer be required to maintain judging lists as the Kennel Club will be publishing lists of judges, across all breeds and all levels of show, via its online Find A Judge facility. This will save a lot of work for clubs, make the life of show secretaries much easier, and help introduce full transparency to the process.

The JCF requires judges to progress in a logical way, learning the basics, attending breed seminars, being mentored, then observed judging, and finally taking a breed hands on assessment.

The Framework starts at entry level, before a person steps into the ring for their very first appointment, and goes all the way through to the rare position of an all-breeds judge – seven levels in all. Judges can remain at any one of the levels if they so wish and can also be at different levels dependent on their knowledge and experience of a range of different breeds at any given time. Progression through the levels is at the judge's discretion. Everyone learns at different speeds.

The proposals include additional mandatory seminars. There will be a new Critique Writing Course, the KC will provide this online via the Academy. This needs only be taken once. Those who are already existing CC judges will be exempt from this requirement, but with a strong recommendation that this is undertaken.

There will also be a new 'An Eye for a Dog Test'. All judges seeking approval through the Framework to award CCs for their first breed or a further breed for an established CC judge will have to have passed this new test. This is a one-time requirement.

This course is being developed by the KC working closely with the Finnish Kennel Club. The course will seek to ensure judges have a greater understanding of conformation and movement, be able to recognise and describe how a dog is constructed and how it moves. They will also need to be able to identify various dog breeds. The test is on construction and movement it is not breed specific. Existing CC judges not wishing to add further breeds will not need to take this test.

All breed clubs are required to hold a 'Breed Appreciation Day' at least every two years from 1/1/19. This seminar will end with a multiple choice exam based on the breed standard and will be organised in accordance with the Kennel Club Code of Best Practice. Advice and guidance will also be provided on compiling a multiple choice exam. Breeds with more than 1 club will need to work together to provide this new requirement.

There is a flow chart at the end of this article, which explains the new process as simply as possible, but briefly the detail for each level is:

Entry Level

Before being able to judge at all, people will have to have undertaken basic training and to have demonstrated they have sufficient knowledge to judge a limited number of classes at limited and open shows.

Level 1 Judge

From 1.1.19 only those who have attained Level 1 will be able to judge at KC licenced Limited & Open Shows, unless they are a previously approved CC judge or on a B list or above.

To attain Level 1 a judge will need to have:

1. A proven interest of a minimum of **5** years in one or more aspects of the breeding and exhibiting of pedigree dogs (including show administration/stewarding).
2. Undertaken 6 days of stewarding appointments.
3. Attended a Kennel Club Requirements of a Dog Show Judge (RDSJ) seminar and passed the exam.
4. Passed the Kennel Club 50 Points of the Dog assessment.
5. Attended a Kennel Club Conformation and Movement seminar.
6. Undertake the critique writing course.

A Level 1 judge can only judge a limited number of classes and only up to open show level.

Level 2 Judge

To gain this level you will have attended a breed appreciation day and passed the multiple choice exam on the breed standard. You can then judge an unlimited number of classes of the breed concerned at Open and Limited shows and well as non CC classes at Championship shows.

At this stage judges may choose whether they wish to progress towards CC status, and can progress at a speed that suits them.

Level 3 (awaiting final assessment)

To achieve this level the judge will need to have:

Passed the 'Eye for a Dog' test. (This only needs to be done once)

Undertake three 1:1 mentoring sessions within that Breed and be 'signed off' by the mentor.

Pass an observation whilst judging at a breed club show, supported entry show (all breed clubs must support a minimum of 2 of these per year from 1.1.19) or a Non CC Championship Show.

Have bred & or owned a minimum of 3 dogs when they obtained their 1st entry in the KC Stud book - save for exceptional circumstances. (This is a one-time qualification)

Attended the appropriate FT event for gundog breeds

Ensure that you have attended a RDSJ seminar and passed the exam within the past 5 years

Level 4

Judges may apply for L4 status once they have passed the breed specific assessment, candidates will apply to be registered as a Level 4 judge and subsequently be listed as eligible to award CCs in that breed. It will no longer be necessary to have an invitation to judge or complete a questionnaire before being considered to award CCs.

Existing A2 Kennel Club approved judges and established CC judges will transition to Level 4.

Level 4 judges will be eligible to judge AV classes & groups/BIS at open shows.

Level 5

Once a judge has awarded CCs to 30% of the breeds in a group they may apply to become a Level 5 judge (Group Judge).

Level 5 judges can register as a Level 2 judge for all breeds within that group without attendance at a breed educational day, although they are encouraged to do so.

Once a Level 5 judge has awarded CCs to 75% of the breeds in that group the Judges Committee has discretion to award Level 4 status to the judge for the remaining breeds in that group.

Level 6

Once a judge has judged 3 different groups they can apply to become a Level 6 judge (BIS judge).

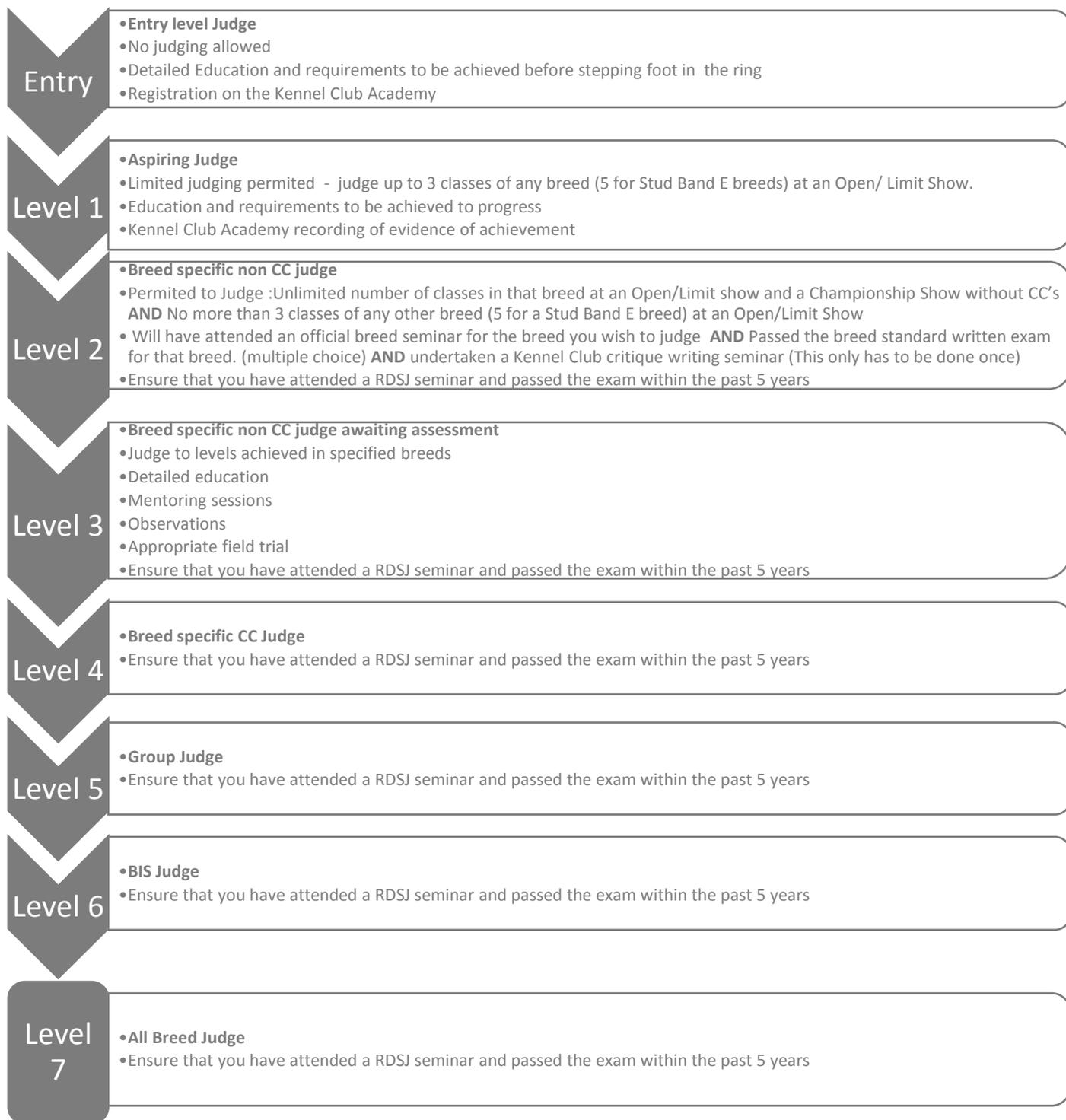
Level 7

There will be a small number of 'all breeds' judges. They will be approved to award CCs in all breeds recognised by the Kennel Club, and approved to judge all groups at general and group championship shows.

They will have judged BIS, 6 of the 7 groups and a significant number of breeds at CC level.

Full information can be found at <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/judges-education/breed-show-judges-training/judges-competency-framework>

Jeff Horswell
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Please Note: Once a judge has **Level 1 Judge** status, which is a one-time achievement, Levels 2 – 4 are to be achieved on a specific Breed-by-Breed basis. It is, therefore, feasible for a Judge to be at different levels in different Breeds at the same time.