

Judges Competency Framework Overview

In the spring of 2017 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. This is known as the Judges Competency Framework (JCF).

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 smaller 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, 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 will now be 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.

KC investment

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 experienced judges and trainers 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 a significant amount of money in the education and training of judges, this will be a cost to the KC over the first four years. After that the scheme is expected to be self-funding, but there is no intention to make money, just cover costs.

Transition period

The JCF will formally start in January 2019 on a phased basis, and run alongside the current system for a three-year transition period, and be fully operational from January 2022. It is anticipated that the new IT system will be in place by the end of 2019. The education will be supported by a network of Breed Education Co-ordinators who will help facilitate learning. These co-ordinators are currently being appointed by their breed clubs.

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

Breed clubs will remain responsible for providing breed-specific education, and the JCF 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 Competence Assessments.

Pilot scheme

A small pilot scheme involving 14 breed clubs from all seven groups, all five Stud Book bands and non CC breeds has been in place for the past year, which has enabled the Kennel Club to make refinements to its proposals before the JCF becomes fully operational. Many useful suggestions have been made and implemented.

Early feedback has been very positive. The Breed Appreciation Days have been well run, enjoyable and informative. Mentees have found the mentoring sessions held so far to be very helpful, and the relaxed, no pressure, environment has made learning enjoyable.

Breed club judging lists

Clubs will no longer be required to maintain judging lists from 1 January 2022 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.

C lists will become redundant from 1 January 2020. To be able to judge from this date you will need to be registered at JCF Level 1 or above (having met all of the criteria) OR be on a breed club B list or above for that breed.

The JCF requires judges to progress in a logical way, learning the basics, attending Breed Appreciation Days, being mentored, then observed judging, and finally taking a Breed Competence Assessment.

The JCF 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 is a new Critique Writing Seminar online via the Kennel Club Academy. This needs only be passed once. Those who are already existing CC judges will be exempt from this requirement, but with a strong recommendation that this is undertaken.

Eye for a Dog assessment

In April 2018 the new 'An Eye for a Dog' assessment was trialled, and proved to be a great success. Judges seeking approval through the JCF to award CCs will have to have passed this new test. This is a one-time requirement.

This assessment has been developed by the KC working closely with the Finnish Kennel Club. The test 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 January 2019. This seminar will end with a multiple choice Breed Standard Exam and will be organised in accordance with the Kennel Club Code of Best Practice which will provide guidance on compiling an exam. Breeds with more than one club will need to work together to provide this new requirement.

JCF Level progression

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 January 2020 only those who have attained JCF Level 1 will be able to judge at KC licensed limited and 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 Points of the Dog assessment.
5. Attended a Kennel Club Conformation and Movement seminar.
6. Passed the Kennel Club online Critique Writing Course.

A JCF 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 Breed Standard Exam. 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. Attendance at previous breed seminars with assessment passes will be able to be used to register at this level.

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:

1. Passed the 'Eye for a Dog' assessment (This only needs to be done once)
2. Undertake three mentoring sessions within that breed and be 'signed off' by the three mentors.
3. Pass an observation whilst judging at a breed club show, supported entry show (all breed clubs must support a minimum of two of these per year from 1 January 2019) or non-CC classes at a championship show.
4. Have bred and or owned a minimum of three dogs when they obtained their first entry in the KC Stud Book – save for exceptional circumstances. (This is a one-time qualification).
5. Attended the appropriate field trial event for gundog breeds or online German Shepherd Dog exam if appropriate
6. Ensure that you have passed a RDSJ exam within the past five years

Level 4 – CC Judge

Judges may apply for JCF Level 4 status once they have passed the Breed Competence Assessment. Candidates will apply to be registered as a JCF 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 JCF Level 4.

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

Level 5 – Group Judge

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

JCF Level 5 judges can register as a JCF Level 2 judge for all breeds within that group without attendance at a Breed Appreciation Day although they are encouraged to do so.

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

Level 6 – Best in Show Judge

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

Level 7 – all-breeds Judge

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, six of the seven groups and a significant number of breeds at CC level.

Almost every breed has now appointed a Breed Education Co-ordinator, who will oversee how the JCF operates in their breed, taking people through from JCF level 1 to JCF Level 4. A full list of BECs is available on the KC website at www.thekennelclub.org.uk/jcf

Full information, including frequently asked questions, on the JCF can be found at www.thekennelclub.org.uk/jcf or contact the Education and Training Team at the KC on jcf@thekennelclub.org.uk

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