

**MEETING OF THE OBEDIENCE LIAISON COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT 10.30 AM
ON TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2026 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

A G E N D A

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

ITEM 2. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB & DOG TRAINING

The Council is invited to note a verbal update from Mrs H Lawrence (Head of Education and Dog Training) and Mrs F Moore (Youth Training and Volunteer Development Manager).

ITEM 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2026 (copies previously distributed).

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Liaison Council is invited to note that the Activities Committee, at its meeting on 24 March 2026, approved the following amendments to G Regulations:

Amendment to G8. Application

TO:

The application for a licence to hold an Obedience Show must be made to the Secretary of The Royal Kennel Club at least six months before the proposed date of the show together with the appropriate licence fee. **In the event that a winter show (Between 1 October & 31 March) is unable to apply within that timescale due to venue restrictions, by exception applications will be accepted up to 6 weeks prior to the show.**

(Insertions in bold)

(Effective immediately)

This is provided a number of criteria are met:

- Societies/Clubs will make every effort to apply at least 6 months before the date of the show.
- Where this is not possible for winter shows planned between October & March, Societies/Clubs will contact the Royal Kennel Club six months before the period to inform them that they will be submitting a late application.

- The Societies/Clubs will apply as soon as their venue has confirmed the dates, which must be no later than 6 weeks in advance of the show date.
- The Societies/Clubs will inform the Royal Kennel Club at that time, so that the Regional Support Team are aware of the urgent licence application.

Amendment to the Policy document for winter Obedience shows

TO:

An event cannot be postponed to a later date. Another future date may be booked to replace the cancelled event in consultation with the Royal Kennel Club but must be considered as a separate show/trial. **However, if health and safety reasons dictate, a winter show (between 1 October and 31 March) may be postponed as long as the rescheduled date is within 6 weeks of the original. The original entries, draw and judges should be used where possible and full refunds will be given to competitors who cannot attend the new date.**
(Insertions in bold)

This is provided a number of criteria are met –

- Show Secretary must check that the new date does not clash with any other show within the area
- Check that the same venue is available and rebook
- Check that the judges are available, and arrange for the same judges (where possible)
- Inform the Royal Kennel Club (RKC) of the new date, so that a new license can be issued.
- Inform all competitors of the change and provide a full refund to any competitor that cannot attend the new date.
- There will be no additional entries taken
- The eligibility will remain as it was for the initial show date.

ITEM 5. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN

The Liaison Council is invited to review the new Strategic 5 Year Plan, which was updated to align with the needs of Competitive Obedience, and to discuss any progression.

(Annex A refers)

ITEM 6. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

The Liaison Council is invited to receive a verbal update regarding the Sub-Group's meeting held on 7 April 2026.

ITEM 7. SURVEY RESULTS & REPORTS

Judges Feedback

- a. The Liaison Council is requested to discuss the outcomes of the Judges Survey and review the next steps.

The survey intended to investigate the declining number of judges in Competitive Obedience and discover ways to address the issues through suggestions and feedback from the community. The survey gained 371 responses, of which 260 respondents judge at RKC shows and a further 50 respondents no longer judge.

(Annex B refers)

Championship Qualification

- b. Following a request to do so from the Competitive Obedience community, the Liaison Council investigated the difficulties in qualifying for Championship classes. The Liaison Council, in consultation with the community, created a draft proposal based on the option for change most supported in the initial discussion, recommending progression on Places (substituting the win in Open C for either 3 second places or 6 third places).

A survey was conducted to gather views on the draft proposal, however it was not supported by the majority of the community. The Liaison Council is invited to note the outcome of the survey.

(Annex C refers)

ITEM 8. INTRODUCTORY CLASS REVIEW AND PROPOSAL

In February 2026 a survey was issued to gain an understanding of the Competitive Obedience community's views on the Introductory Class.

The survey requested responses from anyone who had some experience or involvement with the Introductory Class in the past two years, either as a competitor, a judge, or a show organiser, in order to help in a review of the class and consider how it can be improved.

98 people responded from a good cross section of competitors, judges and show organisers. A full breakdown of the results can be found in the Summary of the OLC's Introductory Class Survey.

(Annex D refers)

From the results of the survey, it was concluded that the Introductory class does meet a need for confidence-building and accessibility, particularly for those new to the discipline. However, the community's concerns about its structure, progression value, and practicality are significant.

Overall, the evidence suggests the concept of the Introductory Class is valuable, but its current implementation requires improvement to fully support competitors, judges and show organisers.

Based on feedback from the obedience community, the Liaison Council investigated a simplification of the exercises and the scoring in the Introductory Class to revitalise the class and make it more attractive to competitors, judges and show organisers.

The proposed exercises include:

- Heelwork set up as in the current exercises.
 - Heel on lead with two simpler pattern options and a change of direction to replace the 4 pattern options some of which have a reward break in between.
 - A full recall to replace the current exercise which is broken into 3 parts. Marks for 'Teamwork' with clearer guidance to replace the current marks awarded for 'Engagement'.
- a. Therefore, using the results from the survey, the Liaison Council is requested to consider the following amendments to the regulations relating to the content of the Introductory class:

Amendments to Regulation G(A)9(e) Introductory

TO:

9. Introductory.

(e) The detailed test will be:

~~(1) Engagement – this will be marked throughout the test – the use of motivators and rewards before and between exercises which may include food, silent toys, tricks, and verbal and physical praise within the reward area of the ring. Toys and food in a closed container, must either be left on the reward table, or be concealed in the handler's pocket during tests, where only verbal motivation may be used to keep the dog engaged. 10 Points~~

~~(2) 1) Heelwork to be set and marked as 2 distinct exercises:-~~

~~2-1a. 'Heelwork set up on lead' and 21b. 'Heelwork on lead'~~

~~a) Heelwork Set Up - on lead, handler to set the dog up in heelwork position, in a designated spot, facing the judge, on steward's command.~~

~~Handler to be asked if they are ready, when this is acknowledged, steward will say 'end of test' 2-5 Points~~

~~b) Heel on lead, from a moving start and detailed in Annex G(C)4 c and d – Tests 8-15 Points~~

~~(3) 2) Recall, to be set and marked as 3 distinct exercises:-~~

~~(a) 'Recall Present' – On lead dog sitting in front of the handler, handler takes one step back on steward's command, then calls the dog into the present again on~~

~~steward's command, the steward will say 'end of test' — 2 Points~~

~~(b) 'Recall Finish' — on lead. Dog sitting in front of the handler, on steward's command, handler directs the dog to heel, whilst keeping feet still, the steward will say 'end of test' — 2 Points~~

~~(c) 'Recall — on/off a long line — handler's choice'. On command, the handler shall leave the dog in a sit or a down in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog which must return briskly — no present is required, but will not be penalised — once the dog has returned, the steward will say 'end of test' — 6 Points~~

At the start of the exercise the dog should be in the sit or down position (handler's choice of position) at the handler's left side. On command, the handler shall leave the dog in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog which must return briskly to the 'present' position and sit. When instructed, the handler will command the dog to go to the heel position on the handler's left side and sit in the 'heel' position. 10 points

- (3) Teamwork. Overall marks are available for teamwork in terms of:**
- When and how verbal praise is used during the exercises and how verbal/physical praise, tricks, food and/or play rewards are used before and between exercises.**
 - How the handler supports and encourages their dog to help them cope with the ring experience. 5 Points**

(4) TOTAL 30 35 Points

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

- b. In addition, the Liaison Council is requested to consider the following amendments to the Test regulations for the Introductory class:

Amendment to Regulation G(C)4.c. Tests – Heelwork

TO:

c. Heelwork - in all classes at the start and end of the test the dog should be sitting straight at the handler's side except in Introductory, which will be from a moving start **with no halt at the end.**

(Insertions in bold)

Amendment to Regulation G(C)4.d.(1) Tests – Heel on lead

TO:

d. Heel on lead

(1) Introductory Class. ~~Heel on Lead will be broken down into distinct tests, as detailed above,~~ Heelwork from a moving start, to be on lead and will be

either:-

- a) A large 'figure of 8'8 points
- b) Or a large 'S' shape.....8 points
- c) Or an arc or circle in one direction, break off and reward and the pattern then repeated in the opposite direction.....4 points plus 4 points
- a) a large circle in both directions.....15 points**
- b) or a U shape along three sides of the ring in both directions..... 15 points**
or parts thereof depending on the size of the ring (e.g. for a large ring just an arc in both directions or two straight sides of the ring).

Judging will only begin at a marked point so the handler may start with a sit at heel before the marker or do a moving start.

The change of direction in either pattern can be a small arc rather than an about turn.

If the U shape is used, handlers do not need to do formal turns in each of the corners, but they may work the turns if they wish but they will not be marked.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

Amendment to Regulation G(C)4.f.(2) Tests – Heel on lead

TO:

f. Recall

(2) Introductory Class — will be divided into three parts — 4.f.(1)a. Present, 4.f.(1)b. Finish and 4.f.(1)c. Recall, and will each be tested separately.

- a) 'Present' — on lead dog sitting in front of the handler, handler takes one step back on steward's command, then calls the dog into the present on steward's command, the steward will say 'end of test' 2 points
- b) 'Finish' — on lead dog sitting in front of the handler, on steward's command, handler directs the dog to heel and finish in a sit, whilst keeping feet still. The steward will say 'end of test' 2 points
- c) 'Recall' On/o Off lead or on a long line — handler's choice. At the start of the exercise the dog should be in the sit or down position (handler's choice of position) at the handler's left side on or off a long line (handler's choice). On command, the handler shall leave the dog in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog, which must return briskly to the handler. A present is not required, but will not be penalised. The steward will say 'end of test' 6 points

(2) Introductory Class - At the start of the exercise the dog should be in the sit or down position (handler's choice of position) at the handler's left side. On command, the handler shall leave the dog in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog which must return briskly to the 'present' position and sit. When instructed, the handler will command the dog to go to the heel position on the handler's left side and sit in the 'heel' position.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)
(Effective 1 January 2027)

- c. If the above proposal is recommended for approval, the Liaison Council is also invited to consider whether to amend G(C)1.f, which relates to the timetable of judging. This has been suggested as reducing the number of exercises in the Introductory Class would require less time to judge the class.

Therefore, the following amendment has been suggested:

Amendment to Regulation G(C)1.f(7) - Timetable of Judging

TO:

f. Timetable of judging - to assist the show executive the following guide timetable is issued:

(7) Introductory Class ~~10~~ **12** dogs per hour

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

(Effective 1 January 2027)

ITEM 9. PROPOSALS

To submit a proposal or discussion item, please use our online form so the Obedience Liaison Council can discuss and review the suggestion further. Submissions are accepted at any time of year via this form: [Liaison Council Agenda Item](#).

Competing and Officiating on the Same Day

- a. The Liaison Council is requested to consider a proposal to allow judges and stewards to compete and officiate on the same day.

As raised under Item 6 above, in February 2026 the OLC conducted a survey to better understand judging participation, challenges, and potential solutions. From the survey, it was identified that one of the barriers to judging was that judges would miss an opportunity to compete.

The Liaison Council is invited to note that the proposal aligns with a recent request from the YRKC to develop a proposal to allow judges of YRKC Obedience classes to compete on the same day. Overall, the aim is to increase judge availability and support shows more effectively.

A full background can be found in Annex E.
(Annex E refers)

After consulting with the community, the following amendments have been submitted for consideration. The Liaison Council is requested to consider the submission in relation to YRKC judges as well as judges for standard Competitive Obedience classes.

Amendment to Regulation G33.d – Judges and Judging

TO:

With the exception of those judging a Championship C class, judges at Competitive Obedience shows ~~must not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their sole ownership, or handle a dog,~~ **may compete in one class with one dog** at the show at which they are judging **(except Championship C)**. **This is provided that the class they are judging takes priority, the judge and steward(s) all go to compete at the same time, if relevant, the scent exercise is not disrupted . Before judging commences, the judge must advise competitors what time they will be leaving their ring and what time judging will recommence, they must adhere to those times. The ring in which they are going to compete must also be notified of times.** A dog recorded in **sole or** part ownership with the judge may be entered for competition in any part of a class other than the part which the judge is judging.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

Amendment to Regulation G30.g – Management

TO:

Judges should, whenever possible, provide their own caller stewards, but the show management shall provide any caller stewards if necessary. **With the exception of those officiating in a Championship C class**, Gcaller and scribe stewards used by judges at the show ~~must not work a dog on the same day, with the exception that a caller and scribe stewards~~ may compete in one class with one dog **(except Championship C)**, other than the class in which they are officiating, provided that the class in which they are officiating ~~has 25 entries or less. Caller and scribe stewards taking up this option will be exempt from any running order and may compete at a convenient time agreed by the judges concerned.~~ **takes priority, the judge and steward(s) all go to compete at the same time, if relevant, the scent exercise is not disrupted.**

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

As this is a significant change to the G regulations, it has also been suggested that a trial suspension for regulations G30.g and G33.d could be implemented until December 2027 instead.

If an immediate suspension of the current regulations is recommended, it would enable data to be gathered over the remaining 2026 show season to

assess the uptake, effectiveness and practicality of the proposal. The data could then be reviewed at the Liaison Council's 2027 summer meeting to assess whether the proposal would effectively address a current barrier for judges. If successful, the above proposal could be brought in as a regulation for 2028, after reviewing the data from the suspension period.

Run Offs

- b. Following a request from the community, due to multiple interpretations of the regulations relating to run offs, the Liaison Council wish to clarify that handlers have the choice of whether to complete the run off. It has been raised that there may be many reasons why someone cannot complete the run off and the majority view believed that the handler should not be penalised for this.

The proposal wishes to address that in the event that a handler declines the run-off, or if only one person turns up to the run-off, then the absent competitor would have forfeited the place. If both competitors declined the run-off, then the judge would decide the order of placings.

From the consultation with the Competitive Obedience community throughout March 2026, 75.5% of competitors were in favour of the suggested proposal.

Therefore, the following addition to the regulations has been suggested:

Amendment to Regulation G33.i

TO:

In the event of dogs obtaining equality of marks, 'Run Offs' to decide the winning dogs will be judged one at a time by completing one or more of the tests for that class as set out in Annex A.

If only one handler presents themselves for a run off they will take the higher place. Those who decline or do not present themselves for a run off, will not forfeit their place, but accept the lower place(s) in the order decided at the discretion of the judge.

(Insertions in bold)

ITEM 10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Concerns Over Number of Judges

- a. The Liaison Council has been investigating ways to address the decreasing number of judges and are invited to discuss ways in which to encourage people to become Competitive Obedience judges.

Some background and options for ways forward have been provided in Annex F, with the suggested recommendation of setting up a working group between the Obedience Liaison Council and the Accredited Trainers to discover possible solutions going forward.

(Annex F refers)

Promoting Competitive Obedience at Crufts

- b. It has been raised that Crufts is the ideal event to promote Competitive Obedience to the general public and encourage people to the discipline.

Although there are multiple ways that the public could be exposed to Competitive Obedience at Crufts, the Liaison Council felt that each display or competition became standalone events with no consistency of presentation and delivery.

At Crufts 2026, it was also observed that Competitive Obedience appeared much more serious to the public when compared with other activity disciplines. Whilst it is impressive to watch, it has been suggested that this could intimidate beginners, or those being exposed to the discipline for the first time, who may not believe their dog could reach the same standard.

With these elements in mind, the Liaison Council is invited to discuss how to better promote Competitive Obedience at Crufts in order to ensure the activity is showcased as being accessible and appealing for all ages and abilities.

Other areas to consider include how to provide consistent messaging and advice at Crufts for anyone thinking about taking up Competitive Obedience and how to link dog training to the Royal Kennel Club's Health and Wellbeing agenda.

Online Seminars for New Competitors

- c. One of the identified actions within the Strategic objectives is to develop an engagement plan for new competitors including ways to make Competitive Obedience training more easily available.

Since the Covid pandemic, online seminars have become a more accessible way to reach a wider audience. The Liaison Council is invited to consider the feasibility of staging an online seminar, for new and aspiring handlers. This would be to trial this a new form of promoting competitive obedience to a wider audience and supporting newcomers who are starting out on their Competitive Obedience journey.

Examples of subjects that a seminar could cover include:

- How to get started in competitive obedience
- Bridging the gap between training and competing.
- Ring entrances, set ups and moving from one exercise to the next
- The value of training rounds
- Handling the human's ring nerves

It has been suggested that the online seminar sessions could be recorded, to enable those who register but cannot attend to catch up after the live event.

The Liaison Council is requested to discuss if this would be useful and whether to progress the idea on a trial basis to assess interest and the value of online learning.

If the Liaison Council wishes to progress with the idea, things to consider include the most appropriate platform to use, format and content, timings, and possible costs involved.

ITEM 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the Liaison Council's next meeting will be confirmed by September 2026.

THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB'S STRATEGIC AIMS

- Champion the wellbeing of dogs
- Safeguard and enhance the future of pedigree dogs, addressing breed-associated health issues
- Protect the future of dog activities together with our grassroots network
- Become relevant to more dog owners to increase our impact
- Deliver an excellent member experience and widen our community