



Proposal to allow judges and stewards to compete.

Background

In line with the RKC Strategic Objective to 'protect the future of dog activities together with our grassroots network', the OLC identified the need to develop a programme to ensure that there are sufficient competent judges, ring and chief stewards into the future.

In February 2026 the OLC conducted a survey to better understand judging participation, challenges, and potential solutions. The results from 371 obedience community members highlighted that the sport is in the middle of a judging crisis with the number of people retiring far outstripping the number of new judges qualifying. Consequently, steps need to be taken to encourage more eligible competitors to judge.

Alongside issues around the training of confident new judges and the need to support current judges, one of the barriers to judging was identified as competitors missing an opportunity to compete, particularly if they don't attend many shows in a year. When asked what would encourage competitors to take on more judging appointments, although 50% stated that they felt they did their fair share, of the remaining half, 53.5% selected the option 'being able to work my dog on the same day that I am judging'.

In response, this proposal seeks to allow both judges and stewards to compete in one class on the same day as they are officiating at a show. It should be noted that RKC Regulation G30g currently allows caller and scribe stewards to compete in one class, other than the class in which they are officiating, provided that the class in which they are officiating has 25 entries or less.

This proposal also aligns with a recent request from the RYKC to develop a proposal to allow judges of their classes to compete on the same day. Overall, the aim is to increase judge availability and support shows more effectively.

The OLC consulted with the obedience community allowing feedback in person, online and through meetings from 30th March to 19th April 2026. There were 239 responses. Of these 57.7% (138) agreed to the proposal, 32.6% (78) disagreed with the proposal and 9.6% (23) were neutral.

Regulations in Question

G33d Judges and Judging

Judges at Competitive Obedience shows must not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their sole ownership, or handle a dog, at the show at which they are judging. A dog recorded in 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.

Change 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), 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 and, before judging commences, the judge advises competitors what time they will be leaving their ring and what time judging will recommence and they adhere to those times. The ring in which they are going to compete must also be notified of times so that other competitors do not get ready and then find they have to wait whilst other people



go in ahead of them. 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.

And

G30g Management

Judges should, whenever possible, provide their own caller stewards, but the show management shall provide any caller stewards if necessary. Caller 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, 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.

Change 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,** ~~caller 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 **takes priority, the judge and steward(s) all go to compete at the same time, and if relevant, the scent exercise is not disrupted.** ~~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.~~

Recommendation

As this is a significant change to the G regulations, the OLC recommends that this proposal is initially implemented as an immediate suspension to the current regulations to enable data to be gathered over the remaining 2026 season to assess the uptake, effectiveness and practicality of the proposal. This will then be reviewed for the July 2027 OLC meeting. If the proposal becomes a permanent rule change, then the two relevant parts of the two regulations may be combined into a new regulation.

We recommend an immediate suspension of both the first element of rule G33d which states that ‘Judges at Competitive Obedience shows must not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their sole ownership, or handle a dog, at the show at which they are judging’ and the phrase in G30g ‘provided that the class in which they are officiating has 25 entries or less’.

Instead allow judges, caller stewards and scribe stewards other than those officiating in Championship C classes to work a dog in one class, with the exception of a Championship C class and the class in which they are officiating.

This is provided a number of criteria are met:



- The class they are officiating in always takes priority over their opportunity to compete, so for instance, they may have to forfeit their chance to complete the scent discrimination if the timings do not align with the class they are officiating in.
- Each person only competes in one class, with one dog and they enter that class in the normal way before the closing date of show entries. They will be exempt from any running order. Shows may want to consider offering judges and stewards free entries.
- The judge and steward(s) **all go to compete with their dogs at the same time** so there is only one stoppage for ring work. In deciding on the time to compete, they will need to consider the number of competitors in the classes they are competing in, for example if a steward is competing in Pre-Beginners that class may have a low entry number so they will need to break earlier to work their dogs than for a larger class.
- Before judging commences the judge and stewards all advise their competing class judge what time they will present themselves to work.
- The judge advises competitors what time they will be leaving the ring and what time judging will recommence and **they adhere to those times**. Any notification must always be visible to all competitors from when they book in.
- If the class they are officiating in includes scent discrimination, the judge and steward(s) must compete before or after all competitors have worked the scent exercise. They cannot break off during scent to work their dogs because, especially for C scent, they may return smelling of treats.

Rationale

We need to take immediate action to address the current judging crisis. Other options arising from the survey are more complex and will take time to address. The option of allowing judges and stewards to work their dogs at shows they are officiating at is one that is desired by the obedience community and can begin to be tested straight away. There is also momentum from the RYKC to help attract judges and stewards for the RYKC Obedience classes by allowing them to compete with their dogs.

This proposal will encourage more judges and stewards to support the shows to the benefit of show organisers and competitors alike.

Allowing this to proceed as a suspension to the rule will enable us to gather some data as to its effectiveness and to the practicalities of how it works before becoming a permanent rule change.

Date of proposal

26th April 2026