

Referee Pathway Programme

1. Purpose of Document

The Referee Pathway Programme was established in 2015. This document sets out the background behind the creation of the Programme and describes the current operation.

2. Background

It was identified in 2015 that the availability of referees and the standard of refereeing in British Fencing was not supporting the future aspirations and goals of our Talent Pathway and Senior Elite (at that time, WCP) fencers as effectively as desired.

Two main areas were identified:

- BF had minimal presence or influence at the highest levels internationally and therefore the subjective element of refereeing at World level has no British influence. This was identified as a contributing factor in a 2015 Foil team defeat at the European Championships. Our most successful Epee referee had also recently retired potentially leaving no GB Grand Prix list referees.
- We are failing to prepare our top-level fencers for international competition as the style of refereeing and interpretation of the rules in the UK is different to that experienced internationally. Training up a larger co-hort of internationally active referees who can also actively referee in the UK will enable our fencers to be better prepared for international refereeing convention when they do travel.

2.1 Challenges & Opportunities

- British Fencing historically have not always given GBR referees the available opportunities to perform international refereeing duties when British fencers compete abroad. This is largely due to financial constraints as sending British referees is typically more expensive than hiring local referees.
- There is no formal method of sharing international experience between referees. There are informal networks but these are not nationwide nor are they linked into referee training. Top referees do not run seminars and attend training camps for our elite fencers
- Possibly because we do not feed our international experience back into our referee training, the style of refereeing and interpretation of the rules in this country has diverged from the accepted

Referee Pathway Program

international norm. This creates problems as our fencers find it difficult to adapt to international refereeing when they start competing abroad.

- Other than the 2016 Eden Cup Foil FIE exam we are unlikely to host FIE refereeing exams in GB as we hold no multi-weapon tournaments which is the preferred practical assessment arena for the FIE exam. This means our candidate will always have to take the exams abroad. Hence, we will be limited to a very few spaces each year (1/weapon/year – none in Olympic year) to which we can send FIE referee candidates.
- At the highest level, referees are chosen to participate in major championships by the FIE Referees Committee or the EFC. Any development of credible referees will have to run alongside a program to gain more influence at this level.
- We have some top qualified referees residing in the UK that referee for GBR at EFC level, but who are not in fact British. The feeling is that as far as possible these referees should be given similar opportunities to develop their skills where there is little direct competition (For example, if an Irish referee is selected by the FIE it does not hinder a GBR referee). Ultimately this would extend our influence at international competition level as these associates would referee under their Nation. Also, these referees would be allowed to referee the GBR athletes. The idea would be to have some 'Associate' category which would allow the non-GBR referees to benefit from training opportunities.
- There is a desire at FIE level to get more female referees at major events, therefore there are occasionally quotas – at training courses, exams and events. For example, we are allowed to send a second candidate for an exam on the proviso that the candidate is female. We should therefore find ways to encourage and support more women to referee and take advantage of these quota scenarios.

3. 2021 Pathway Objectives

The Pathway's original purpose is to identify those referees who are capable of refereeing internationally at future Olympics and support them (through provision of training, mentoring and experience) to referee to the highest standards. This skillset is then to be used domestically to increase the standard of refereeing within British Fencing events and to better support our current and future elite fencers in their performance goals.

In summary, the Pathway Objectives are

- Increase the influence and reputation that GB have at international level. We will do this by increasing the number of qualified referees active at FIE level who are able to support our international aims and objectives
- Increase the standard of refereeing at the highest level of competition in the UK. We will do this by providing active UK based referees the opportunity to further develop their skills.

3.1 2021 Specific Tactics

The Referee Pathway programme will deliver on the objectives by:

- Ensuring each pathway member has the opportunity to work in conjunction with a nominated mentor to create an individualised 5 year plan which includes the right level of international

Referee Pathway Program

- exposure and training to progress through the levels
- Enabling sharing of knowledge between referees so that the limited international experience available to British referees is used to its maximum potential
- Providing additional training opportunities within the UK to gain exposure to nominated FIE Refereeing Experts
- Supporting the training goals of the Talent programme (e.g. Pathway referees may attend training camps to disseminate rule interpretation at an international level.)
- Increasing the number of women referees – by identifying the additional support to overcome traditional gender barriers within the sport. This will typically be in the form of mentoring and additional training.
- Maximising all opportunities to access FIE training and exam opportunities
- Delivering on agreed refereeing objectives as specified in any UK Sport award agreements (International Relations)
- Be efficient with resources by aligning with and supporting the (UK Sport funded) International Relations objectives and activities.
- Running ‘mock’ FIE exams to prepare candidates.

4. Criteria and Selection

The original application process for referees interested in joining a Pathway Program was conducted in 2015. Applicants were considered and categorised, taking into account the desire for any pathway candidate to be able to referee for at least 10 years at the highest level (FIE forces referees to retire at 60).

Following the 2016 announcement from the EFC regarding the new Continental (C) grade referee level being required prior to selection for FIE (B) exams.

4.1 Pathway Levels

In 2017, the Pathway levels were adjusted to take into account the new levels and Referees were categorised accordingly.

Old Level	New Level	Description	Target 2021	Actual 2015 (?)	July 2016	July 2017
A	A	Domestic Level 3 - one weapon	20	5		
B	B	Domestic Level 3 - two or more weapons	12	5		
	C	EFC C grade - one weapon				
	D	EFC C grade – two or more weapons				
C	E	FIE Qualified - one weapon	6	6		
D	F	FIE Qualified - two weapons	6	0		

Referee Pathway Program

E	G	FIE Grand Prix List	3	1	0?	2
---	---	---------------------	---	---	----	---

4.2 Pathway Development Categories

In addition referees are given the opportunity to further sub-categorise to better inform the processed around training, development and international allocation & selection.

- FIE - Senior Grand Prix Circuit Referee
- FIE - Established Active FIE Referee (3 or more seasons recent experience)
- FIE - Newly qualified at FIE (<3 yrs qualified)
- FIE - Re-emerging, <3 seasons recent experience
- FIE - Building experience (generic)
- FIE - Willing to help out occasionally if required (typically used by Pathway members who may be taking a short break from international activities – e.g. for lifestyle reasons)
- EFC 'C' qualified, aiming for FIE Exams in next 1-2 seasons
- EFC 'C' qualified, building experience/confidence, FIE exam 3-4 yrs out
- Aiming EFC 'C' qualification - first weapon
- Aiming EFC 'C' qualification - second weapon (First weapon, FIE qualified 3 or more seasons)
- Aiming at Level 3, second weapon
- Other, please describe
- None specified

4.3 Minimum Entry Criteria

In order to join the Pathway Programme, referees are required to:

- Be a member of British Fencing
- Be qualified at Level 3 in at least one weapon
- Demonstrate a commitment to refereeing at the major fencing competitions in the UK (including but not limited to the BF Nationals series)
- Have refereed at international level – e.g. U15 European tournaments, non-nominated EFCs (where referees can travel with their clubs)
- Demonstrate a desire to progress and operate at FIE level
- Have a satisfactory disciplinary record

Alongside an application form, Referees wishing to join the pathway will be required to submit their refereeing diaries.

At this current point in time (2017) the FIE do not permit referees over the age of 60 to referee

Referee Pathway Program

at FIE level. Therefore, whilst there is no maximum age set for entry to the pathway, all other things being equal, priority will be given to candidates that are a) realistically able to be put forward for FIE exams, prior to reaching that age and b) subject to becoming qualified have a reasonable time frame in which to operate at that level.

BF will work with the Home Countries to encourage referees not yet at Domestic Level 3 to achieve this standard. These initiatives will also look at opportunities to give single weapon pathway referees the opportunity to develop a second weapon to Level 3 where required.

4.4 Criteria to remain on the Pathway

In order to remain on the Pathway Programme, referees are required to:

- Be a member of British Fencing (Supporter level will suffice)
- Maintain all required international refereeing licences (e.g. EFC/FIE)
- Actively engage in a positive manner with BF over refereeing matters (eg answering emails in a timely fashion, working in a constructive and supportive manner with BF staff, other Pathway referees and volunteers)
- Demonstrate a commitment to refereeing at the major fencing competitions in the UK (including but not limited to the BF Nationals series)
- Actively refereeing at international level over and above the nominated opportunities provided by BF
 - Level 3/C Grade – e.g. U15 European tournaments, non-nominated EFCs
 - FIE qualified – FIE Satellites
- Demonstrate a desire to progress and operate at FIE level
- Participate in Pathway FIE level training and development opportunities
- Assist in the development of less qualified Pathway members (eg through supporting, training and mentoring)
- Maintain an exemplary disciplinary record
- Act as an ambassador for British Fencing

Referees wishing to remain on the pathway will be expected to submit their refereeing diaries on an annual basis, typically as part of the annual International Allocation & Selection process.

4.5 Exceptions and Dispensations

Becoming an International Referee is typically a process that takes many years and during this time it is expected that allowances will need to be made to adjust for 'lifestyle' and short term (1-2 seasons) dispensations and exceptions will be granted.

Examples include - work secondments abroad, University exams, family commitments, health issues.

During this period, referees may choose to be designated as **Inactive** if they are unable to

Referee Pathway Program

referee at all.

4.6 Membership Status/Exit from the Pathway

The default status of a member of the Programme is **ACTIVE**.

Whether through lifestyle choices or lack of ability it may not be always possible for referees to progress through the pathway. Membership of the pathway will be considered on an annual basis (typically as part of the annual International Allocation & Selection process) and the status of members may be updated as a result.

A visible and demonstrated commitment to all British Fencing run domestic competitions will also be taken into consideration when reviewing an individual referee pathway status.

Non Active Pathway members will be registered as:

- **INACTIVE** – Normally years due to life style/ personal circumstances. Valid for a maximum of 2 years. This will be clearly marked on the register.
- **TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED** – Based on a failure to meet one or more of the criteria of membership of the Pathway. Usually based on lack of demonstrable involvement in refereeing at BF run National Championships and/or engagement in Referee training and development. Valid for a maximum of 1 year until either a) a positive commitment is shown towards the Pathway goals and attending BF run competitions or b) referee is removed from Pathway.
- **REMOVED** – Based on a continued failure to meet Pathway Membership criteria. Can also be due to concerns over the referee's ability/lack of appropriate progress. Should circumstances change, pathway members are at any time permitted to re-apply for re-inclusion.

All reasonable attempts will be made to make contact with referees individually to discuss status changes prior to implementation.

5. Pathway Benefits

- Grants (GBR only, subject to availability) to support refereeing development
- Priority access to training and development opportunities, including mock FIE exams
- Tailored Mentor support
- Priority opportunities to referee internationally (eg through nominated EFC and Junior World Cups)
- Priority opportunities to referee at BF run (National and International) Competitions (subject to qualifications and ability)
- FIE exam entry (GBR only, subject to qualifications and ability)
- Grand Prix list nomination (GBR only, subject to qualifications and ability)

Referee Pathway Program

5.1 Level Specific Notes

Level A&B

Once a referee has achieved a Level 3 and is regularly refereeing at L8 or more at the major domestic tournaments we expect referees to start their international refereeing careers by accompanying their clubs to U15 and U17 competitions.

Once a referee can demonstrate that they have suitable experience at this level, BF will seek to start allocating funded opportunities (expenses only) to Level A&B referees.

We currently allocate referees to travel to at least 22 tournaments abroad throughout the year – of which 12 are EFC tournaments for which we send 3-4 referees per tournament.

These opportunities will be split between:

- Future C grade Candidates – Referees that are not yet ready to be assessed at C grade level will get the opportunity to supplement their U15/non nominated International experience with a nominated competition.
- Current C grade Candidates - Referees who wish to be assessed for C grade need to attend 3 competitions. BF will do their best to prioritise candidates that believe they are ready to be assessed for their C grade at EFC level*. However, referees that are assessed by the EFC for more than 2 seasons may not be able to continue being prioritised as other referees in the programme will be allocated these vacancies for their development.
- FIE Exam Candidates - Candidates with C grade who are on the nominated list to sit their FIE exams within the next two season
- Newly qualified FIE referees – in some cases it may be appropriate to send newly qualified FIE referees to EFC tournaments to prepare for their FIE competitions
- Mentors - For each nominated EFC tournament we will aim to send 1 FIE qualified referee to act as support and mentor to unqualified referees.

*For foil and sabre we expect candidates to make themselves available for the Camden and Manchester as one of the three competitions – Epee referees that are not allocated three funded opportunities will be able to access a grant system

Level E, F & G

These referees will be encouraged to attend as many FIE competitions as possible and will be promoted by BF representatives.

6. Non-UK based GBR Pathway referees

BF recognised that there are GBR referees not based in the UK who wish to pursue an international refereeing career. In order to be a member of the Pathway there is a minimum commitment required

Referee Pathway Program

to referee in BF run competitions and participate in training and education. BF will not fund any additional travel and accommodation cost incurred to participate in these activities as a result of a referee not being based in the UK.

7. Non GBR Pathway referees

BF recognise that UK based non GBR referees wishing to pursue a career as an International FIE Referee still have an important role to play in delivering the aims of the pathway.

Specifically:

1. Improving International Relations, Influence & Reputation – There is a limit to the number of GBR candidates that can be put forward for exams. Encouraging and supporting UK based non GBR referees to become FIE qualified and retain an appropriate level of activity supports this objective
2. Raising the standard of Domestic level competition – The more UK based international level referees that we can use for our top-level competitions, the better the experience that can be provided to our athletes.

Whilst GBR referees will remain the primary focus of the Pathway, UK based non GBR referees can join the Pathway as **Associates**. Associates will still be required to have demonstrated the minimum entry criteria.

Associate pathway referees will receive the following benefits:

- Attendance at GBR run FIE level referee seminars – priority over non-pathway referees.
- Secondary allocation to nominated international competitions (after the GBR Pathway referees' needs have been prioritised). We will aim to give active FIE qualified Associates Pathway Members at least one opportunity per year to referee at FIE level.
- Supporting letter to their home nations citing our support of their suitability for FIE exams.

Associate referees will not be eligible for grants to pursue their international refereeing goals.

If an Associate Pathway referee is no longer residing in the UK, then they will no longer be eligible to be a member of the Referee Pathway Programme.

8. Declaration of Good Character

In line with best practice in Sports Governance, British Fencing currently requires all FIE exam candidates to complete a Declaration of Good Character. This is particularly important as all exam candidates are currently funded by grants from UK Sport as part of the International Relations programme.

9. Annual Review

As part of the annual process for allocating and selecting referees for nominated Internationals BF will conduct a review of the Referee Pathway Programme. This review will include

- Review of the aims and objectives (as documented above)
- Review the progress of the activities (as documented above)

Referee Pathway Program

- Review of the/any budget and expenditure
- Assess individual applications and expressed CPD requests
- Re-status referees using the internally held Referee Reviewing activities of current members and adjusting Activity log, feedback from and from any British Fencing run FIE mock exams and/or seminars.

As a result of the annual review this document will be updated and republished alongside the current Referee Pathway Programme membership list.

10. Appendix A - British Fencing Competitions

Pathway members are expected to make themselves available for British Fencing run competitions throughout the year, including:

- National Championships (cadet, junior and senior)
- The British School Teams Championships
- The British Youth Championships
- Camden International and The Eden and Leon Paul Cups (weapon and qualification dependent)

The Pathway Member are also expected to support BRC events run throughout each season.