



# Referee Pathway Programme

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## 1 Purpose of Document

This document sets out the background and high levels plans for establishing a British Fencing Referee Pathway Programme.

## 2 Background

Currently the availability of referees and the standard of refereeing in British Fencing is not supporting the future aspirations and goals of our Talent Pathway and WCP fencers as effectively as desired. There are two main areas that can be readily identified that can provide benefits:

- We have minimal presence at the highest levels internationally and therefore the subjective element of refereeing at World level has no British influence. This has already been identified as a contributing factor in a recent Foil team defeat at the European Championships. Our most successful Epee referee is just about to retire. Italy the number 1 nation at the London Olympics has 25 FIE referees as compared to 8 registered to GB
- 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.

## 3 Challenges & Opportunities

- British Fencing have not always been able taking up all opportunities for giving GBR referees the opportunity international refereeing 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. We also need our top referees to run seminars and attend training camps for our elite fencers
- 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 international norm. This creates problems as our fencers find it difficult to adapt to international refereeing when they start competing abroad.
- 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 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 is the possibility that quotas may in the future be introduced – at training courses, exams and events. There is the opportunity to engage with the FIE Women and Fencing Council to leverage resources to help our female candidate referees.

#### **4 Aims of the Pathway**

The Pathway's 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 WCP fencers in their performance goals.

#### **5 Summary of Approach**

##### **5.1 Selection**

British Fencing ran an open application process for referees interested in joining a Pathway Program. Applicants were then considered and categorized as follows, 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).

The candidates fall into the following categories

A – Domestic Level 3 at one weapon

B – Domestic Level 3 at more than one weapon

C – FIE Qualified at one weapon

D – FIE Qualified at two weapons

E – Invited to Grand Prix (or equivalent) at one weapon (in last year)

F – Invited to Grand Prix (or equivalent) at two weapons (in last year)



| Pathway Level | Target Number of Candidates | Actual Number of Candidates (ex Associates) |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| A             | 20                          |                                             |
| B             | 12                          |                                             |
| C             | 6                           |                                             |
| D             | 6                           |                                             |
| E             | 3                           |                                             |
| F             | 3                           |                                             |

## 5.2 General Support

The Referee Pathway programme will:

- Ensure each pathway member has the opportunity to work in conjunction with a nominated (by Referees Committee (RefCom)) mentor to create an individualized 5 year plan which includes the right level of international exposure and training to progress through the levels.
- Enable sharing of knowledge between referees so that the limited international experience available to British referees is used to its maximum potential
- Provide additional training opportunities within the UK to gain exposure to nominated FIE Refereeing Experts
- Support the training goals of the Talent and WCP programme (eg Pathway referees may attend training camps to disseminate rule interpretation at an international level.)
- It is an accepted fact that the international refereeing community is a very male dominated, conservative environment, where women referees are subjected to a higher degree of pressure to perform and find mistakes much more harshly criticized. Additional support will be given (in the form of mentoring and additional training) to the female referees. It is likely that the FIE Women in Fencing Council initiatives may result in some additional Women Only Referee Courses & Exams which should be appropriately accessed.
- Extra funding will be available for pathway referees to attend specific events, extra competitions and seminars.

## 5.3 Specific Level Support

(There will be a separate initiative to encourage referees not yet at Domestic Level 3 to achieve this standard.



These initiatives will also look at opportunities to give Level A referees enough exposure domestically to a second weapon. )

### **5.3.1 Level A&B**

At level A& B we want to encourage candidates to maximize the experience they are receiving at EFC level. We currently allow squads to travel to at least 22 tournaments abroad throughout the year. The intention is that 1 FIE qualified mentor ref (NB this does not need to be a pathway referee) would be sent accompanied by 2-3 referees for which the costs are covered by the athletes attending. The minimum that we would want each candidate at A, B or 2<sup>nd</sup> weapon C to attend would be 3 EFC competitions a year.

Provide supplementary international refereeing experience at EFC level to active domestic referees.

### **5.3.2 Level C**

Level C referees will be encouraged to develop their refereeing at a second weapon, This will be carried out at both domestic and foreign competitions as appropriate.

### **5.3.3 Level D E & F**

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

## **5.4 British Fencing Competitions**

As a demonstration of commitment to the Pathway Programme, appropriate level pathway referees will be the referees of choice for all British Fencing National Championships (All age groups).

In return for the support of the Programme, pathway members are expected to make themselves available for a minimum number of 3 British Fencing run competitions throughout the year

## **5.5 Exit from the Pathway**

Whether through lifestyle choices or lack of ability it may not be always possible for referees to progress through the pathway. After consideration, pathway members may be suspended from the programme or completely removed depending on the circumstances. Should circumstances change, pathway members are at



any time permitted to re-apply for re-inclusion.

## **6 Non Pathway referees**

Pathway referees will be given priority for selection to FIE exams, however other referees will still be asked to go to competitions abroad where it is considered appropriate