



AMERICAN
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Conformation Judging Approval Process

amended effective January 10, 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Whom should I contact with any questions concerning the approval process?

We are happy to answer your questions about the Judging Approval Process. Please send questions to judgingops@akc.org or Tim Thomas, Vice-President of Conformation, at tjt@akc.org. You also may speak with any Conformation Executive Field Representative.

2. I am permit status in breeds approved prior to January 1, 2018; what requirements for regular status do I follow?

All requirements for regular status are based on the policy in effect at the time of submission, not at the time the breed(s) were first approved on permit status.

3. Will the amended policy result in changes to forms in the application packets for new and additional breed applicants?

Yes, there will be updated forms, but the revisions will be minimal. Applications received on or after May 1, 2022, should be submitted on forms dated May 1, 2022. We will continue to accept individual breed applications on the most recent forms through the early months of implementation, but the questionnaire should be on the current version as the certification will be updated.

4. How does the modifications affect the process for new (first-time) applicants?

The experience criteria for first time (New Breed) applicants have not changed. The revisions effective May 1, 2022 will expand the maximum number of breeds one may apply on their initial application to up to a complete group or the equivalent number of breeds in the largest group (not to exceed a full group). Applicants will remain required to meet the criteria of the 12-5-4 or New Breed Alternative application for each breed submitted on their initial application.

The enhancements approved by the Board did include the option for a dispensation for exemplary applicants with extensive experience. The dispensation would allow for the acceptance of an application for a complete group when the individual does not satisfy the criteria of 12-5-4 or NB Alternative applications for all breeds in that group. To be considered the individual must have a minimum of 25 years of breeding and exhibiting experience in conformation in the requested group with significant experience and success as a breeder and/or exhibitor for a predominate number of the breeds within the group.

All first-time applicants must continue to compete all pre-requisite requirements including the successful completion of the ABCs of Dog Breeding: Canine Anatomy Course in the AKC Canine College.

- 5. I will be applying for breeds for the first time and would like to apply for multiple breeds. Am I required to use the same application form (12-5-4 or New Breed Alternate) for all of the breeds that I intend to apply?**

New Breed applicants (first time) may qualify to apply for a breed by meeting the requirements of either the 12-5-4 or New Breed Alternative; however, the 12-5-4 is considered the default application and must be used if the individual meets its criteria.

If requesting the approval of multiple breeds, the applications submitted for the grouping of breeds may be a combination of both the 12-5-4 and the New Breed Alternative forms.

- 6. If I apply for a breed and am denied and I reapply for the same breed later, do I have to pay the application fee again?**

No, effective September 1, 2015; applications for judging approval submitted under this policy require a non-refundable \$35 application fee per breed. For any breeds not approved, credit will be assigned for any subsequent application for the same breed(s). Per policy, a period of six months must pass before one can reapply for a previously denied breed.

- 7. When am I required to take the AKC breed exam?**

The breed exams remain part of the approval process for all applicants. All applications for approval to judge a breed (New Breed, Additional Breed & Adjunct) are to complete the applicable breed exams online in AKC's Canine College prior to application. The exams are also required for judges approved for a group when a newly recognized breed is added to that group, and for those wishing to complete In-Ring Apprentice Training experiences.

- 8. Will exams taken at seminars under a previous version of the approval process be applied toward the exam requirement for applicants under the new?**

No, the exam requirement for seminars under a previous version of the approval process was for the purpose of certifying attendance only and the exams were shorter in length.

- 9. What are the requirements to request regular status on my permit breeds?**

Judges may submit a request for regular status in permit breeds to Judging Operations once he or she has completed three assignments in each breed with dogs present and judged and received three observation reports in any combination of the breeds regular status is being requested.

10. Am I required to receive a minimum number of reports on my permit breeds to qualify for regular status?

Yes, there are specific report requirements associated with the advancement to regular status. Per policy, all judges requesting regular status must be observed a minimum of three times by different AKC Executive Field Representatives from the combination of breeds submitted for regular status. All judges, regardless of the number of breeds/groups approved, should expect to be observed on permit breeds. Observations in judging procedure or Judges Breed Commentary reports may be requested from the office when concerns regarding one's judging have been brought to its attention. While the requirements do mention "by different AKC Executive Field Representatives..." judges should not hesitate to submit if they have met all other requirements but have multiple reports from the same Field Representative as the department considers all factors.

11. How do I advance to regular status for low entry breeds?

For Low Entry breeds only, if one is unable to satisfy the standard requirements for regular status, Judges may request regular status for low entry breeds once they have been assigned the permit breed on six occasions regardless of number of entries judged. This would not pre-empt the requirement for additional assignments when one has received JBC reports in a breed recommending further study in that breed.

12. What is expected in the interview with the Executive Field Representative on my applied breed?

The interview is your opportunity to share the knowledge you have acquired about your breed or breeds. Applicants should be prepared to discuss the hallmark breed type characteristics, strengths and/or weaknesses, disqualification and/or conditions of class, examination techniques and dentition (if applicable). The applicant may use pictures and consult the standard during the interview.

First time judging applicants will also discuss proper procedure, rules, conflicts of interest, the gray areas of the sport, demeanor, special attractions and expectation of judges.

A wicket or scales test is also required if any of the breeds' standards have disqualifications or conditions of class for height or weight.

A complete list of subjects that may be covered is included in the interview letter.

13. In my interview, am I required to recite each disqualification exactly as printed in the breed standard?

No, applicants should be able to display knowledge as to whether the breed has standard disqualifications and where they apply.

14. Are judges currently approved for measurable breeds still required to take the wicket and/or scales test when applying for additional breeds?

Judges who have been tested on the same apparatus in the previous five years will not be required to be tested. However, the exemption does not include judges who have received a negative observation report on measuring procedure or failed a test on the same apparatus during the five-year period.

15. How am I affected if I failed the wicket or scales test?

Failing a wicket/scales test will result in a hold being placed on the affected breeds pending the passing of a re-exam on the same apparatus. Breeds not affected will progress without delay.

16. Once my application has been reviewed, how soon may I accept assignments?

You may not accept assignments until you have received notification by the AKC that your breeds have been approved. This will follow the review of the total application by the Department, the initial publication in the AKC Gazette. Applicants may receive notification from the Judging Operations Department as soon as two months following receipt but should expect three months from the date the application is received barring unforeseen delays.

17. How do I qualify to apply for additional breeds?

Additional breed applicants (2nd application forward) must meet the minimum number of educational credits (CEUs) for an application for additional breeds to be accepted. The number of CEUs needed is determined whether the breed is low entry or not and the experience of the judge.

Low entry breeds require less CEUs than non-low entry breeds as the expectation is that educational experiences are more difficult to obtain. For both, as judges become approved for more groups, the number of CEUs required is lessened with reductions occurring once a judge is approved for one complete group on regular status and then again once approved for four complete groups.

The maximum number of complete groups that ONE may be approved under the traditional process is four (4). (See #27)

18. When may I apply for additional breeds and how many breeds may I apply for at onetime?

First time applicants must achieve regular status on all permit breeds before being eligible to apply for additional breeds (2nd application).

Current judges may apply for up to 12 additional breeds on one submission. The number applied may not exceed the maximum number of permit breeds allowed at one time if all were approved. The maximum is determined by the number of complete groups currently approved on regular status displayed in the matrix found on page 2 of the Judging Approval Process.

Judges may continue to apply for additional breeds while permit status in others. However, no application may be received within three (3) months of the most recent committee action, and no complete group may be obtained in less than three separate submissions.

Judges may advance up to four complete groups under the traditional process. Request must be submitted in advance for any application that would advance beyond four groups.

19. What experiences may be used to qualify for additional breeds and how are they weighted?

The policy provides 12 general categories of experiences that one may complete to receive CEU credit. In addition, applicants may submit an experience not defined within the policy to be reviewed by the department to determine if it warrants credit toward the requirements. Each experience is assigned a CEU value based on its perceived benefit and is displayed in the matrix found on page 2 as well as explained in detail within the Judging Approval Process.

20. Where can I complete ringside observations?

Ringside observations are a great way to gain knowledge from experts in the breed. There are two ways that you may receive viable experience from ringside observations.

First, you can participate in formal ringside observations at Parent Club National Specialties where formal ringside mentoring is offered. The CEU credit assigned is listed under the category “Attend a Parent Club National Specialty.”

You may also complete ringside observations at any show with a major entry present in the breed. The CEU credit assigned is listed under the category “Ringside Observation with Breed Mentor...”

In all cases, the ringside observation form should be used to document the experience.

21. Who may serve as a mentor?

Individuals who are parent club mentors, have 12 years’ experience exhibiting or 12 years as an approved judge in that breed may serve as mentor. This applies for the purpose of a long-term mentor, tutoring session, kennel visit, or ringside observation.

22. Are there restrictions associated with the Apprentice Training?

Judges are required to pass the breed exam and submit a \$35 breed fee before completing their first Apprentice Training for that breed. The exam and fee will count toward the subsequent application unless there has been a revision to the breed standard since that time which would require re-taking the exam.

Those who wish to schedule these experiences must make arrangements prior to the show with the consent of the show chairperson and the mentor judge. To be accepted for CEU credit, there must be a major present in the breed. Apprentice Judge is expected to observe the entire entry but may not be in the ring with any one judge for more than two (2) hours.

23. Will applications be accepted by email or fax?

Yes, applications may be sent to the AKC Judging Operations via fax or email as well as via the US Postal Service, UPS, FedEx, etc. In addition, applications may be submitted electronically through the portfolio feature in AKC's Canine College.

We do ask that applications being sent via electronically to be converted to pdf documents as scanned images will result in extremely large file sizes and may be blocked by your outgoing or AKC's incoming servers.

Applicants who elect to submit their application via email should never include credit card information. It is recommended that they contact Judging Operations via phone once received to submit payment of any required fees.

24. Do I need to submit documentation for educational experiences?

Yes, copies of certificates or other educational experiences should be submitted with your application.

25. How is my application reviewed under the current process?

The Department will be responsible to review the complete application including the interview report, breed exam results and observation reports.

Applicants will be published twice. Following receipt of the application, the judge's name and list of requested breeds will be published for the 1st time in the AKC Gazette, providing an opportunity for the fancy to comment on the application. The applicant will be advised of any questions or concerns that arise and provided the opportunity to respond before any further AKC action is taken if warranted.

Following the interview with the Executive Field Representative, the Department will review the entire application including any comments received from the fancy. If there is not significant cause to withhold approval, the Department will notify the judge of the newly approved breeds and that they may now accept assignments. The judge's name and breeds will be published in the AKC Gazette a second time.

26. If the Department denies approval of any breed(s), do I have the option to appeal?

Yes, the applicant may, within 15 days of the notice, appeal in writing to the Judging Operations Department. If the department determines no change should be made, the appeal will be forwarded to the Board Appeals Committee. The Board of Directors shall finally determine all appeals. A \$50 appeal fee is required.

27. How do I advance my judging beyond four groups?

Judges wishing to judge more than four complete groups must submit a request to the department prior to submitting application. Request's will be considered based on one's proficiency in current breeds, ring procedure and demeanor. A request is required to precede any application that extends a judge beyond

four groups and all subsequent applications. All requests will be reviewed independently. Requests approved will apply under the traditional Additional Breed applicant requirements.

28. What is “Advancement Designation” and how is that obtained?

Advancement Designation is found under the “Application to Judge Additional Breeds” section of the Judging Approval Process and defines a process where staff may identify and nominate judges for advancement based on their experience, history of observation reports, correspondence from the fancy, conduct and demeanor.

This provision includes two benchmarks; judges approved for at least two groups may be nominated to be advanced for ½ of a group, and judges approved for at least four groups may be nominated to be advanced a full group. Nominees will be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration, those approved would be designated for advancement and may accept or decline the invite.

The process to identify and nominate is internal and completed by the Judging Operations Department and the Conformation Executive Field Representatives. It is not a process where individuals request, solicit or recommends others.

29. What is unique about being designated to advance?

Those advanced will remain to be required to complete all breed exams and remit the \$35 fee for each breed, as well as be successfully interviewed by a member of the Executive Field Staff. They will not be required to meet the minimum CEU requirements of the traditional additional breed process. Here the emphasis is placed on the judge’s knowledge gained through experience, their permit assignments, and frequent observation and mentoring with the Executive Field Staff.

Judges advanced for a group will remain on permit status for a minimum of two years; those advanced ½ of a group will remain on permit status for a minimum of 18 months. The Advanced judge is expected to continue the pursuit of education in permit breeds via attendance of breed seminars, mentors, kennel visits, online education, etc. Continuing education should be documented as it will be submitted to Judging Operations at the end of the permit period.

The Advanced Judge should expect to be observed by an Executive Field Representative at all permit assignments and should be prepared to discuss any of the permit breeds assigned the weekend/cluster. The observation process is greatly intended to be a mentoring experience and the Advanced Judge is experiencing the sharpest part of the learning curve.

At the end of the permit period, the department will review the judge’s history of assignments including number of attempts and entries judged in each breed, Executive Field Staff observation reports, documentation of continued education in that group, and any correspondence from the fancy to determine if regular status in group (or breeds) should be granted or if permit status should be continued for an additional six-months. The provision also provides a mechanism for advanced judge designation to be removed if an individual experiences consistent difficulty.

30. What is the role of the Executive Field Representative?

The Executive Field Staff remain essential to the successful implementation of the policy and our events on the whole. The Executive Field Representative should be looked at as the first person to go to when questions or issues arise. They are there to assist in all matters associated with judging at AKC Conformation Events and will serve as mentors and trainers to help prepare judges.

The Executive Field Staff will continue to interview all judging applicants. In addition, they will conduct wicket & scales exams when required as part of the application or as a result of a negative report in measuring or weighing dogs.

All judges are subject to observation and judges assigned permit breeds should expect to be observed by a member of the Executive Field Staff. Judges approved for less than one complete group on regular status will be observed on their judging procedures at all permit assignments in addition to Judges Breed Commentary Reports as applicable per policy.

31. How does the Judges Breed Commentary (JBC) differ from the Breed Evaluation reports completed by the Field Staff prior to 2018?

The JBC is a modified method to observe breed specific judging. The focus of the experience is the recognition and discussion of breed specific characteristics in the entries present. The emphasis is not on the placements or which dog did or did not win, and thus the restrictions as far as what defines a “sufficient entry” are essentially eradicated. The discussion may include entries from all classes. Comments from the judge and the Executive Field Representative pre-and post-discussion will be provided on the form that will be submitted to the AKC. Completed JBC reports will be reviewed by the Department as part of the process when one requests regular status and when applying for additional breeds.

32. How am I affected if the Field Representative expresses concerns in the post-discussion portion of a JBC report?

Per policy, additional permit assignments may be required if the JBC recommends further study or indicate concerns recognizing hallmark characteristics and/or Procedural Observations display difficulties with judging procedures.

The JBC reports are reviewed when requesting regular status and when one applies for additional breeds. It is recommended that if a judge should receive a JBC report that expresses concerns that resulted from the post-observation discussion, he or she consider proactively seeking additional JBC reports on the same breed. Subsequent reports without concerns expressed would be viewed as an indicator to the department that the concerns have been resolved.

One should expect to complete at least two additional assignments in that breed with observation before regular status will be considered for that breed. The department may consider on a case-by-case basis documented additional education obtained in the breed from qualified mentors, attending seminars, etc., in addition to or in lieu of further JBC reports.

33. As a group judge, what is the process to approve a newly recognized breed in a group I am approved to judge?

When a new breed enters a group, all judges of that group will be granted approval of the breed once they have successfully passed the breed exam and submitted the \$35 non-refundable breed fee. Notice of this requirement is sent approximately six months prior to the full recognition date for the breed. Failure to complete the breed exam before the breed is fully recognized will result in the loss of group status and the requirement to apply and be approved under the traditional process for additional breeds to restore the group status.

34. What are the requirements to apply for approval to judge Best in Show?

Judges approved for at least one group on full status may request approval to judge Best in Show if they have judged that group on at least five (5) occasions. Assignments to judge a group prior to achieving full status in the group will not be counted toward the requirements for Best in Show. A \$35 non-refundable fee is required for those requesting the approval to judge Best in Show.

35. For Adjunct breeds, what happens if I fail the exam or refuse to pay the processing fee?

Judges who fail to pass the breed exam or refuse to submit the processing fee prior to the full recognition will lose their Group approval status.

36. If I lose my Group status, how can it be restored?

Judges may apply for approval of any affected breeds under the traditional process for additional breeds.

37. I am currently an inactive judge and considering applying for reinstatement, has the process for this changed from the previously adopted policy?

The requirements for re-instatement have not changed; individuals must submit a non-refundable re-instatement fee of \$35. Re-instatement will be automatic for those inactive for less than one year. Individuals inactive for more than one year must satisfy all requirements of the policy to have their privileges reinstated.

38. How do I get approved to judge the Miscellaneous classes?

Any judge eligible to judge a Group on a regular status may also judge the Miscellaneous class.

39. Can the approval of a breed or breeds be removed?

The policy includes a defined process to address when one may have difficulties in a breed. If a judge should receive multiple JBC reports in a breed indicating concerns and/or recommending further study, judge will be placed on “probational status” in that breed. Additional JBC reports on a probationary breed indicating concerns could lead to a recommendation to the Board for the removal of that breed.

Three consecutive JBC report in the probationary breed that do not display concerns or recommend further study from two or more Field Representatives will remove the probationary status. The Department may petition the Board for the removal of one's approval to judge a breed for just cause.

40. Can my parent club recommend me for breeds other than the breed in which they represent?

No, a parent club can only recommend its members to judge their own breed.

41. Do Parent Clubs still have the ability to invite an individual not approved to judge their breed to judge the National or regional specialty?

Yes, that option is still available under the new judging approval process. In addition, this opportunity will now be available to all specialty clubs, not only Parent Clubs. Under this provision, an eligible individual including professional handlers may be approved on a case-by-case, event-by-event basis.

42. How does a specialty club recommend an individual to judge their breed at its specialty?

The parent club must submit the applicable form available on the AKC website to the Judging Operations Department for an eligible individual to judge their breed at a specialty. The individual must meet all criteria, pay the \$35 processing fee, and pass the procedural and anatomy exams as well as a scale and/or wicket tests if applicable.

Once all requirements have been satisfactorily completed, notification will be sent to the individual, specialty club and the Event Department of the approval to judge the specific event requested only.

43. If a non-approved judge is recommended and approved to judge a specialty, can they judge that breed at other events as well?

No, approval is limited to the specific event request and may only be granted for independent, concurrent or designated specialty shows.

44. Can Foreign Judges be approved to judge more than sixteen (16) days of shows a year?

Foreign Judges on the exempt list may be approved for an unlimited number of assignments. Those not on the exempt list will continue to be eligible to be approved to judge an unlimited number of independent specialty shows and no more than sixteen days of all-breed or limited-breed (group) shows. Assignments to judge at two all-breed/limited-breed shows the same day count as one against the annual limit of sixteen days. An assignment to judge at the AKC National Championship is exempted from this count.

45. I am a Foreign Judge now residing in the United States; may I still judge at AKC shows as a Foreign Judge?

Foreign Judges who have established residence in the United States may only be approved as a Foreign Judge for two years. At the end of the two-year period, they must apply under the AKC system if they wish to continue to judge in the United States while residing here.

46. What is the process for a Foreign Judge to apply under AKC's system whether they have established residence in the US or simply wish to be eligible to judge for more than sixteen days of shows per year?

Foreign judges who have judged breeds and/or groups at AKC conformation dog shows for a minimum of five years may apply under AKC's foreign judges' approval process. To qualify, the Foreign Judge must have been an approved judge of at least five years in their country, and judged AKC events a minimum of five years. In addition, the Foreign Judge must have been assigned breeds requested a minimum of six times at AKC events; with exceptions for breeds recently recognized by the AKC and/or not recognized by their home registry.

Foreign Judges applying under the AKC system and who have established permanent residency in the US may request up to one complete group under this process. Foreign judges who have not established permanent residency and wish to judge more than sixteen days of All-Breed shows per year may apply for up to 14 breeds.

Foreign Judges who wish to apply under AKC's foreign judges' approval process should contact the Judging Operations Department to request an application and for additional details. Those who do not meet the experience criteria may apply under the traditional New Breed application procedures.

47. As a Foreign Judge, can I receive approval to judge breeds not recognized in my own country?

A Foreign Group Judge may gain approval to judge AKC breeds not recognized in their country by passing the applicable breed exam and payment of a \$35 fee per breed. This option only applies to AKC breeds not recognized by the Foreign Judge's registry and located in the corresponding AKC group.

48. I am a Foreign Judge; can I still judge the Group if I choose not to pay the \$35 fee per breed and take the exam for those breeds not approved in my country in the groups that I judge?

Foreign Group Judges who elect not to take the exams and pay the fees for those breeds not recognized by your registry, will be eligible to judge the corresponding AKC group if the breeds eligible to judge constitute 80% of the entries competing in that group at AKC conformation dog shows from the preceding year.