

British Dressage U21 pathway review summary report

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Background

At the beginning of 2020, British Dressage (BD) committed to a review of the rider pathway from our regional programmes and competitions through the Academy structure and up to the International arena. Whilst a complete review has been hampered by the impact of Covid-19 on all areas of our sport, we have still been able to consult with numerous stakeholders in order to identify areas where we can streamline and improve on our existing structures, increase the transparency in the system, and look to provide our riders with the best chance possible to compete at the highest level.

BD Chief Operating Officer Ben Waterhouse conducted the review with direct input from the Chief Executive, International Teams Director and BD Youth Director throughout.

As part of this review we have consulted with a range of stakeholders that are currently part of the pathway or have been involved previously. These include:

- BD Directors
- BD Senior Managers and staff
- British Equestrian World Class staff
- Parents
- Chefs de Equipe
- Selectors
- Trainers /coaches

Key recommendations

The consultation process resulted in a series of recommendations that have been approved by the Board of British Dressage and will be implemented with immediate effect. These changes mean that we can offer a clear pathway from the start of a rider's journey at regional level all the way through to the international arena and, hopefully, then on to the British Equestrian (BEF) World Class Programme pathway.

The majority of these recommendations are around clarifying the selection process for riders looking to be under consideration for our Academy programmes and for the 2021 European Championships.

A key element of these plans is a review of our selection process and criteria based on the following:

- Analysis of results / scores at international championships over the past three years to be carried out. The subsequent criteria (set as the bar for selection to the European Championship longlist) will reflect the standard required to achieve podium level results.
- This will involve working through the FEI statistics to ensure it is based on actual recent championship performances, with the work to be completed by the end of July.

- Resulting criteria and a draft selection policy will be developed ahead of circulation to stakeholders for consultation.
- Final selection policy to be approved and signed-off in August for publication in September.

Alongside the above, the selection criteria for our international teams will be benchmarked alongside the BEF World Class Programme criteria. This will ensure that both elements of the pathway dovetail with one another and provide transparency for all parties.

On completion of this analysis and having updated the selection criteria and policy where appropriate, we will then be in a position to focus our investments solely on riders that have achieved this criteria and will benefit from BD support to attend international competition.

With BD budgets and resources under pressure due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that we are able to demonstrate that any investment is targeted and can produce podium results at international level. In addition, the benefits of directly linking the selection and assessment processes for our [Academy structure](#) and international pathway means that all eligible and capable riders can be seen under the same conditions and at the same time by our selectors, Chefs de Equipe and coaches. We have removed an element of duplication across the two programmes, with the goal of making best use of our resources and providing an aspirational environment for our youth riders.

The next element of the changes being applied from this autumn are to clarify the routes in to our international pathway. We have taken the decision to differentiate between those riders that have already achieved international selection against those that have not yet reached this level.

Current International riders

International riders are defined as those who have competed internationally at their current FEI level and achieved scores over 65% at an international competition (in the team or individual test, scores from the Freestyle do not count).

Please note, those riders that are moving up an age category/level will need to attain 67.5% at their new level in BD High Performance / Premier League competition or attend the Foundation Academy.

For 2020/21 current, international riders will not need to be viewed and a viewing day will not be organised. These riders, who are known to selectors and have achieved the relevant percentage in BD High Performance / Premier League competition to enable them to compete in a CDI in 2020-21 (during the previous 6 calendar months), are welcome and encouraged to be part of a Foundation Academy but this is not a necessity.

Riders that are not current internationals

All riders without international experience will be required to go through the regional squad route with the aim of being selected onto a [Foundation Academy](#). The Foundation Academy programme will provide an opportunity to be viewed and highlighted by selectors and enable riders to access high quality training support during the winter months.

Riders who have NOT ridden internationally will be required to:

- Attend three BD regional events over the summer, one of which may be unmounted.
- Attain a current BD Youth squad level. Our website provides [information and criteria for the squadding process](#).
- If successful at 'B' squad or above, apply for a [Foundation Academy](#) place by Wednesday 19 August.
- Attend all Foundation Academy weekends in the autumn.

Test riding activity will now be carried out within the Academy programme, with riders able to test ride in front of at least two FEI / List 1 judges, at relevant FEI level, with selectors in attendance to support talent identification. It will also allow riders who gain relevant percentages in these test-riding sessions to be considered for CDI selection.

After the CDI at Keysoe in March 2021 and as a result of the procedures outlined above, the selectors will then be in a position to select riders who they feel have a good chance of being included in the teams in the current year in all age groups. This group of riders will be called the 'U21 European Championship Longlist' and they will be invited to attend training activity between March and June, alongside their competition schedules.

Further details will be provided on the training activity at a later date, but this will be tailored to the individual riders and be focused on maximising performance for the European Championships.

Final selection for the European Championships will take place in July at a pre-Championship camp, taking in to account competitive performances and results during the preceding months.

Timeline

In summary, the timeline below will be followed where possible:

- **Now:** Foundation Academy and squadding process open for all riders.
- **July 2020:** announcement made on plans for 2020/21. Analysis of results / scores at international championships over the past three years to be carried out. Resulting criteria and a draft Selection Policy will be developed in parallel ahead of circulation to stakeholders for consultation.
- **August:** Selection policy to be approved and signed-off. Closing date (Wednesday 19 August) for Foundation Academy applications.
- **September:** Selection policy to be published. Successful Academy applicants notified.
- **October & November:** Foundation Academy camps to take place, providing the opportunity for test riding to be undertaken.
- **March 2021:** Keysoe CDI and following this event the longlist will be confirmed.
- **March to June 2021:** Training activity provided for riders on the longlist, alongside competition schedule.
- **June 2021:** European longlist reduced to a shortlist.
- **July 2021:** Final pre-European training camp held for shortlisted riders and selection announced.

Accompanying documents

[U21 pathway infographic](#)

[U21 pathway review 'frequently asked questions'](#)

[Press release - issued 3 July 2020](#)