

2026 Rule Amendment Synopsis

This document outlines the major rule changes in the 2026 Members' Handbook to help members identify new and edited rules ahead of the upcoming season. Any altered or new rules are marked in bold in the Members' Handbook.

Area Festival and Regional Qualification

Ref: Rule 196 Qualifying for an Area Festival

Qualification for the Area Festivals will now be as follows:

Level	Qualification	Offshore
Preliminary to Elementary	Four scores at 62% and above (scores to be from one section, Bronze or Silver)	Two scores at 62% and above
<i>For multiple Area Festival qualifications at Preliminary to Elementary, combinations require a further two scores at 62% or above. For offshore combinations, one further score of 62% or above is required.</i>		
Medium and Advanced Medium	Three scores at 62% and above (scores to be from one section, Bronze or Silver)	Two scores at 62% and above
<i>For multiple Area Festival qualifications at Medium to Advanced Medium, combinations require a further two scores at 62% or above. For offshore combinations, one further score of 62% or above is required.</i>		
Prix St Georges and Intermediate I	Two scores at 60% and above (scores to be from one section, Bronze or Silver)	One score at 60% and above
<i>For multiple Area Festival qualifications at Prix St Georges and Intermediate I, combinations require a further two scores at 60% or above. For offshore combinations, one further score of 60% and above is required.</i>		

Ref: Rule 199 Qualifying for the Regional Championships

Qualification for the Regional Championships will now be as follows:

Level and section	Total scores needed	Minimum % needed
Preliminary Silver	4	65%
Preliminary Gold	4	67%
Novice Silver	4	65%
Novice Gold	4	67%
Elementary Silver	4	65%
Elementary Gold	4	67%
<i>For a second Regional qualification (Preliminary to Elementary), combinations require two further scores.</i>		
Medium Silver	3	64%
Medium Gold	3	65%
Advanced Medium Silver	3	64%
Advanced Medium Gold	3	65%
<i>For a second Regional qualification (Medium to Advanced Medium), combinations require two further scores.</i>		
PSG & Inter I Silver	2	64%
PSG & Inter I Gold	2	64%
<i>For a second Regional qualification (PSG and Inter I), combinations require two further scores.</i>		

Offshore qualification for the Regional Championships will now be as follows:

Level and section	Total scores needed	Minimum % needed
Preliminary Silver	2	65%
Preliminary Gold	2	67%
Novice Silver	2	65%
Novice Gold	2	67%
Elementary Silver	2	65%
Elementary Gold	2	67%
<i>For a second Regional qualification (Preliminary to Elementary), combinations require one further score.</i>		
Medium Silver	2	64%
Medium Gold	2	65%
Advanced Medium Silver	2	64%
Advanced Medium Gold	2	65%
<i>For a second Regional qualification (Medium and Advanced Medium), combinations require one further score.</i>		
PSG & Inter I Silver	1	64%
PSG & Inter I Gold	1	64%
<i>For a second Regional qualification (PSG and Inter I), combinations require one further score.</i>		

Ref: Rule 202d Eligibility for Regional Championships

Summary: *Clarification on the eligibility of combinations contesting two or more Regional Championships.*

“Where horses are competing in two Regional Championships, the combination must be the same at both the first and second Regional Championships. A horse may be ridden by different riders if competing in straight and music classes at Regional Championships, but the rider must remain the same if competing in two straight or two music classes.”

Ref: Rule 200 Qualifying for the Winter Music Regional Championships

Summary: *Changes to the required percentages for Novice (Silver) and Novice (Gold) Music Regional Championships.*

Level & Section	Scores required	Offshore scores
Novice Silver	Two scores of 66% or higher	One score of 66% or higher
Novice Gold	Two scores of 68% or higher	One score of 68% or higher
Elementary Silver	Two scores of 66% or higher	One score of 66% or higher
Elementary Gold	Two scores of 68% or higher	One score of 68% or higher
Medium Silver	Two scores of 65% or higher	One score of 65% or higher
Medium Gold	Two scores of 66% or higher	One score of 66% or higher
Adv. Medium Silver	Two scores of 65% or higher	One score of 65% or higher
Adv. Medium Gold	Two scores of 66% or higher	One score of 66% or higher
For a second Music qualification, combinations require two further scores. For offshore combinations, one further score is required.		

Code of Conduct for Horse Welfare and Tack Checking

Ref: Code of Conduct for Horse Welfare and Rule 118 Tack Checking

Summary: *Updated wording to reflect use of noseband measuring devices moving forward.*

" From 1 January 2026, noseband measuring devices will be used in international competitions and national championship competitions. Where a BD steward is present at regular BD competitions, the noseband measuring device may also be used."

International Rules

Ref: Rule 14 Union flag badges, small recognition pocket badges, saddle cloth badges and jackets

Summary: *Sanctions introduced for ineligible riders wearing team-styled jackets and waistcoats.*

Ineligible riders wearing team-styled jackets/waistcoats

Only riders who have been selected to represent Great Britain on a Championship team, as first reserve or as an individual at a Senior or Para European Championship, World Games, Olympic or Paralympic Games, are entitled to wear the recognised colour combination of navy jacket with red waistcoat points and red collars with white piping.

Riders who wear a team-styled jacket/waistcoat (or any recognisable combination thereof) in BD affiliated competition, but who do not meet the above criteria, will be subject to the following penalties:

1. First offence; formal written warning from BD Head Office and removal of the relevant result from the rider's record.
2. Second offence; sanctions to be applied, including a fine and removal of the relevant result from the rider's record.
3. Continued repeat breaches of this rule will be referred to the Disciplinary Panel and may result in suspension.

Para Rules and Qualification

Ref: Rule 21 Eligibility for Para Dressage

Summary: *Updated age requirements for Para national classification.*

The minimum age for Para national classification has been lowered to enable riders to access national Para dressage competition from an earlier age. Please note that the minimum age for FEI Para classification remains at 14 years of age.

"The minimum age for Para national classification is 12 years of age across the board, for all grades and all types of physical impairments."

Summary: *Updated eligibility rules for Para dressage.*

Eligibility rules for Para dressage have been updated to reflect trends in participation. The Silver section will permit riders with prior experience to compete new or young horses. Riders with a national classification will be eligible to compete in the Gold section; this allows riders to continue to progress within Para dressage, without requiring an international classification.

Are you eligible for the Para Bronze section?		
As a rider (on any horse) have you:	YES	NO
Competed at a CPEDI at any level?		
Competed at a Silver Para Championship and gained a score of 67% or above?		
Competed in a Gold semi-final and/or a Gold Championship in the last four years?		

Are you eligible for the Para Silver section?		
As a combination have you:	YES	NO
Competed at a CPEDI3* in the last four years?		
Scored 67% or above at Gold Para Championships?		

Are you eligible for the Para Gold section?	
The Para Gold section is open to any rider with National (BEF) and/or International (FEI) classification.	

Competitor Dress

Ref: Rule 78 Coats / jackets / waistcoats / shirt

Summary: *Clarification of permitted colours.*

“Any single colour tailcoat or jacket will be allowed (**coloured panels are permitted**).”

“A suitable long or short sleeved shirt of a solid colour is to be worn (**coloured panels are permitted**).”

Supporting Aids

Creation of a new section within Competitor Dress, to consolidate rules regarding the use of voice, whips, spurs and commanders.

Ref: Rule 90 Voice

Summary: Use of voice will be permitted in regular competition and Young Horse and Pony classes.

“Discreet use of the rider’s voice is permitted in regular competition as a supportive aid. It must be used in a way that is unobtrusive and does not disturb the adjacent arena(s). Foul language and obscenities are not permitted and will result in elimination.

The use of the voice is permitted at Young Horse and Pony qualifiers, Young Horse Semi-Finals and Championships and Young Pony Championships.

The use of the rider's voice is prohibited at all other Championships, including Regional Championships, Winter and National Championships, Area Festivals and Area Festival Championships, Regional Team Competitions, Sheepgate U25 Championships, Quest Semi-Finals and Quest Championships, Combined Training Championships, Middle Tour Championships and Associated Championships.

At Championships, the use of the rider's voice is to be penalised by the loss of two marks from the score that would have been awarded for each movement in which it occurred."

Classes and championships	
Qualifiers including Quest	✓
Quest Semi-Finals and Championships	×
Championships inc. Area Festivals, Regionals, Music, Nationals and Winters	×
Associated Championships	×
Combined Training Championship	×
Middle Tour Championships	×
Young Horse and Pony Qualifiers	✓
Young Horse Semi-Finals	✓
Young Horse and Pony Championships	✓
FEI Young Horse tests	✓
Premier League	×
High Profile Show	✓

Ref: Rule 93 Commanders

Summary: Commanders will be permitted in Seven Year Old Young Horse qualifiers.

Classes and championships	
Qualifiers including Quest	✓
Quest Semi-Finals and Championships	✓
Championships inc. Area Festivals, Regionals, Music, Nationals and Winters	×
Warm up classes at championships as stated above	✓
Associated Championships	×
Combined Training Championship	×
Middle Tour Championships	×
Young Horse and Pony - 4, 5 and 6 year old Qualifiers	✓
Young Horse - 7 year old Qualifiers	✓
Young Horse - 5, 6 and 7 year old Semi-Finals	×
Young Horse and Pony - 4 year old Semi-Finals and Championships	✓
Young Horse and Pony - 5, 6 and 7 year old Championships	×
FEI Young Horse tests	×
Premier League	×
High Profile Show	✓

Ref: Rule 93 Commanders

Summary: Commanders will be permitted to use the phonetic alphabet to emphasise the markers.

“The competitor is responsible for ensuring that only the words of the printed text or extracts are read out. The judge may eliminate the rider if this rule is not adhered to. The competitor is responsible for providing their own commander at competitions.

Where appropriate, commanders may emphasise the markers by using the phonetic alphabet.”

Saddlery & Tack**Ref: Rule 97, Bridles**

Summary: *Clarification on how reins are to be held.*

“A bridle with a bit (worn in the horses’ mouth), browband and noseband is compulsory and must be used in the conventionally accepted manner. The loop of the reins must be above the horse’s neck with the reins attached to the bit. **Reins should be held one in each hand, except for riders with dispensation or Para classifications, and when it is permitted at Medium or above in Freestyle to Music tests.**

Reins must be used in their manufactured condition without any addition or adaptation to any part. Reins may not be clipped to the bit. Looped or modified (including knotted reins) are not permitted unless dispensation has been granted see rule 29 and rule 87.”

Tests in Use

Ref: British Dressage Tests in Use

Summary: *Updates to tests in use.*

Young Dressage Horse and Pony Six Year Old Commanded Route (2018)

*Update to Directives: “trot to be ridden sitting, except lengthened **or stretching strides** which may be ridden rising.*

Preliminary Freestyle to Music (2016)

*Update to Non-Compulsory Permitted Movements: “**shallow loops of up to 5m in trot and canter.**”*

FEI Tests (Updated 2026)

*Update to collective mark wording, now reads: “**Harmony (harmony, cooperation, lightness, effectiveness, and sensitivity of aids, as well as adherence to the training scale.**”*

Associated Championships

Ref: Rule 137 Eligibility for the Associated Championships

Summary: *Change to the rule regarding the eligibility of winning combinations.*

*“The overall winning combination, **scoring 68% or higher**, will not be able to contest their title in future years except for the championships detailed below:*

Side Saddle – All levels

Veteran Horse – All levels

All Championships at Medium and above.”

Ref: Rule 137 Eligibility for the Associated Championships

Summary: *Combinations may now only contest two consecutive levels across all classes at the Associated Championships.*

“Combinations may only compete at two consecutive levels across all Championships at the Associated Championships. Please note the maximum number of tests which may be ridden in a day as per rule 120.”

Quest Competition

Ref: Rule 164 Team Quest Leaderboards

Summary: *Change to how points are awarded for the Team Quest Leaderboards*

Leaderboard rankings are based on points, which are awarded according to the team's average percentage as per the scale below. This will encourage more competitive Quest competition and will be a fairer reflection of a team's performance.

Average Percentage	TQ points	Average Percentage	TQ points
60.00 - 61.99%	1	72.00 - 73.99%	7
62.00 - 63.99%	2	74.00 - 75.99%	8
64.00 - 65.99%	3	76.00 - 77.99%	9
66.00 - 67.99%	4	78.00 - 79.99%	10
68.00 - 69.99%	5	80.00% and above	11
70.00 - 71.99%	6		

Direct Qualification to the National Championships

Ref: Rule 213 Direct Qualification to the National Championships from the Premier Leagues and CDIs, Grand Prix Gold

Summary: *Clarification of qualification for the Grand Prix Championships at the National Championships.*

Grand Prix Gold

Places for the Grand Prix Championships will be allocated as follows:

- Automatic qualification for the selected combinations for that year's Senior European Championships or World Championships or Olympic Games.
- Automatic qualification for the winners of each Premier League Grand Prix Gold class (one per Premier League - excluding Grand Prix Special or Freestyle) scoring 65% or above. There will be no qualification pass down if a combination has already qualified.
- Qualification to the three combinations who have achieved the highest scores above 65% in domestic or overseas CDI Grand Prix classes (excluding U25 GP, Grand Prix Special, Grand Prix Freestyle and FEI PYO classes).
- Qualification to the three combinations who achieve the highest average score from three Premier League or High Profile Show Grand Prix and U25 GP classes (excluding Grand Prix Special, Grand Prix Freestyle and FEI PYO classes). At least one score must come from a Premier League. To achieve direct qualification, scores must be 65% or higher.

If the places are not filled by the above methods, additional places will be filled by taking the next highest score from either the CDI list or the list of the highest average scores from three Premier League/High Profile Show Grand Prix classes.

If the places are not filled by the above methods, the remaining spaces to be offered as follows:

- **Combinations who have achieved two scores at Grand Prix or U25 Grand Prix (65% or higher) from Premier League or High Profile (excluding scores gained in Grand Prix Special, Grand Prix Freestyle or FEI PYO), one of which must have been gained at Premier League. The combinations with the highest average score over two scores will be invited to come forward.**