



### Background

The February 2026 survey indicates that the class has mixed support across the interested parties with nearly 87% of competitors saying they like the class or like elements of the class. On the flip side over 64% of judges do not enjoy judging the class and will not judge it again, and only 23% of show organisers schedule the class. That said, 74.5% of respondents felt there is value in having an entry level class below Pre-Beginners and there is broad consensus that:

- New competitors need **support when entering the sport**
- The transition from training to competition can be **challenging**
- Confidence-building and positive early experiences are **critical for retention**

The survey results suggested that a balanced way forward may include:

- **Retaining the class but refining its format** to improve flow and alignment
- **Repositioning it as optional or training-focused** rather than mandatory
- **Ensuring clearer progression towards the Pre-Beginner exercises.**

Overall, the evidence suggests the concept is valuable, but **its current implementation requires improvement** to fully support both competitors, judges and show organisers.

### Summary of the Consultation

Having reviewed the survey results in detail, there is no clear single solution to the issues raised about the Introductory Class, so the most frequently suggested options are presented in this document for feedback from the obedience community.

To comply with current RKC timeframes, any proposals for implementation in **January 2027** need to be approved at the formal OLC meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026, and any proposals for that meeting must be submitted by 28<sup>th</sup> April 2026, having already undergone consultation with the obedience community. Otherwise, any proposals submitted after that date will be for implementation in **January 2028**. Therefore, time is tight to make any changes effective from January 2027.

The suggested options are as follows:

#### Option 1

**Do nothing.** The Introductory Class will remain in its current format until a full review is undertaken of all the lower classes later in the year.

#### Option 2

**Make the class optional to enter.** This was suggested in some comments in the survey and before the survey was released. Rule G(A)3 requires that a dog 'must be entered in the lowest available class for which it is entered'. Making the class optional would require either an exemption from that rule or the class would have to become a Special class. If it is a



Special class, there would still be eligibility criteria and places would still be awarded but there is no link to progression to Pre-Beginners.

Making the class optional may affect entry numbers and therefore the financial viability of running the class.

### Option 3

**Simplify the current exercises and scoring system.** Improve the flow of the exercises so they become as follows:

- **Heel on Lead.** Either a large circle in both directions or a U shape along three sides of the ring in both directions or parts thereof depending on the size of the ring (e.g. for a large ring just an arc in both directions or two straight sides of the ring). Judging will only begin at a marked point so the handler may start with a sit at heel before the marker or do a running start. There is one change of direction in either pattern which can be a small arc rather than an about turn and no halt at the end. If the U shape is used, handlers do not need to do formal turns in each of the corners, but they may work the turns if they wish but they will not be marked. *15 points.*
- **Recall.** This can be done off lead or on a long line and will be stewarded as a standard recall. There will be a present but no finish. *10 points*
- **Heelwork set up on lead.** Handler will be stewarded to set the dog up in heelwork position in a designated spot facing the judge. Handler to be asked if they are ready. When this is acknowledged, steward will say 'end of exercise'. *5 points*
- **Teamwork.** Overall marks (*5 points*) are available for teamwork in terms of:
  - when and how verbal praise is used during the exercises and how verbal/physical praise, tricks, food and/or play rewards are used before and between exercises.
  - how the handler supports and encourages their dog to help them cope with the ring experience.

**Note:** Toys and food in closed containers can still be carried in the pocket or left on the reward table.

### Option 4

**Change some of the exercises.** Improve the flow of the exercises so they become as follows:

- **Heel on Lead.** Either a large circle in both directions or a U shape along three sides of the ring in both directions or parts thereof depending on the size of the ring (e.g. for a large ring just an arc in both directions or two sides of the ring). Judging will only begin at a marked point so the handler may start with a sit at heel before the marker or do a running start. There is one change of direction in either pattern which can be a small arc rather than an about turn and no halt at the end. If the U shape is used, handlers do not



need to do formal turns in each of the corners, but they may work the turns if they wish but they will not be marked. *15 points.*

- **Recall.** This can be done off lead, on lead or on a long line and will be stewarded as a standard recall. There will be a present but no finish. *10 points*
- **New Exercise.** This will start from the reward area and will be on lead. Using one food reward if desired, set the dog up in the sit at heel and feed the dog the treat. You will then be stewarded to walk forward approx. 5 paces, then to walk backwards approx. 5 paces with the dog in the come, then to stop with the dog in the present. You will then be stewarded to finish, then without breaking the dog off, to walk forward approx. 10 paces in heelwork with a halt in the sit at the end. See Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZ823W7UiTE> *15 points*

**Note:** Toys and food in closed containers can still be carried in the pocket or left on the reward table.

### Option 5

**Training Ring Style Class.** This would be open to anyone eligible for the Introductory Class. There would only be a judge who has experience of training handlers at the lower levels. The teams are allocated 6 minutes during which they can work on anything related to heelwork or recall or moving from the reward area into an exercise. The judge will have a set heelwork pattern to steward if needed and can offer advice if requested. Food or toys can be carried and given anywhere in the ring but not dropped on the ground or thrown. The reward area is available for that. No places or prizes.

### Action Required

Please follow this link to a form that can be completed to give your preferred option and to comment on any of these options. <https://forms.gle/oFVnDB82DXyh9bD68>

Or

Please contact one of the OLC members directly to give your thoughts.

The consultation will close at **5pm on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026**