

UK ATHLETICS RULES GROUP – AUGUST 2025 UPDATE RE 2026-28 RULE BOOK

The timetable and process for consultation on and changes to the current UKA Rules for Competition, led by the UKA Rules Advisory Group, are set out at <https://www.uka.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/UKA-RULE-BOOK-2026-Timetable-for-Changes-Final.pdf>. Prior to and in parallel with that process, the Home Country Athletic Federations (HCAFs) have been carrying out extensive consultations and communication throughout the Sport regarding the implementation of the changes to Age Groups with effect from 1st April 2026 that are referenced in the first paragraph of TR3 S2 within the current Rule Book. Those consultations have been led by the Age Group Implementation Task Group (AGITG), chaired by the CEO of Welsh Athletics (see <https://www.englandathletics.org/about-us/age-group-changes/> and <https://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/events/age-group-changes/technical-specifications/>).

Given the extent of the aforementioned consultation on the implementation of Age Group changes, the Rules Advisory Group has not sought to duplicate the AGITG work and has focused on incorporating the agreed-upon detailed implementation changes into the format required for inclusion in the 2026-28 Rule Book. Priority has been given to those changes where athletes, coaches, clubs, leagues and other stakeholders will need early confirmation that changes set out by the AGITG have received approval from the UKA Board. The Rules Advisory Group are conscious that the usual timescale for publication of the updated Rules (i.e. February 2026) may not provide sufficient notice for those stakeholders to prepare for their effective date of 1st April.

To give sufficient notice as above, early approval has been given by the UKA Board at its July meeting to the following elements of the new Rules affecting Age Groups **for athletes under the age of 18:**

- Specifications for hurdles, steeplechase and throwing implements for non-World Athletics Age Groups applicable to U16 and U14 age groups (see below regarding athletes under 12 years of age). Details may be seen at <https://www.englandathletics.org/about-us/age-group-changes/> in the Technical Information section. UKA Supplements to Technical Rules 22, 23, 33, 34, 36 and 38 will be amended accordingly, using formats consistent with the current Rule Book. UKA supplements for athletes in the U18 age group are not required, as World Athletics Technical Rules provide the necessary details.
- Within UKA Supplement TR3 S2, current references to Under 13 will become references to Under 14, current references to Under 15 will become references to Under 16, and current references to Under 17 will become references to Under 18. Similarly, within TR16 S2, current references to Under 13 will become references to Under 14, and current references to Under 15 will become references to Under 16. Any updates to other details within TR3 S2 (e.g. limitations on the number of races in one day or the age at which athletes may compete in Triple Jump) will be communicated once consultation by the AGITG is completed.
- UKA Supplements TR3 S1 and TR3 S3 (1) are being amended to give effect to the harmonisation of age groups across disciplines through two key amendments,

effective from the winter 2026/27 season, in respect of **Cross-Country and Road**:

- The definition of the competition year will run from 1st October to 30th September (i.e. as for Track & Field and Race Walking), and
- The operative date within that year, used for determining membership of age groups in all disciplines for athletes under the age of 18, will be 31st August at the end of the competition year (i.e. as for Track & Field and Race Walking). In addition, at the request of Scottish Athletics, following a resolution passed at their AGM, a Note, similar to that already in place regarding Northern Ireland, will be added to TR3 S1 in respect of competitions in Scotland to the effect that the qualifying date for all disciplines is taken at 31st December after the end of the competition year.

It is recognised that these changes will, with effect from September 2026, directly impact organisers of Cross-Country and Road competitions which offer competitions for the age categories set out in TR3 S3 and are taking place in the month of September. The HCAFs will work with those competition organisers to ensure that those impacts are effectively and efficiently communicated and managed.

No changes in this respect are currently planned for Hill, Fell and Mountain Running competitions.

- U12 and U10 age groups are not being brought within the full scope of the UKA Rules for Competition, as the Rules Advisory Group strongly believes that the overarching objective of providing competition for these younger age groups is to introduce youngsters to running, jumping and throwing and the development of fundamental movement skills in a fun environment where the safety of the young athlete is of paramount importance. Typically, those competitions will be in multi-event and/or team-based formats, details of which are set out on the Home Country Athletics Federations' websites. UKA Supplement TR3 S1 will be expanded to explain this, and to emphasise that the guidance of the Home Country Athletics Federations in respect of these competitions should be strictly observed, whether or not they are covered by the Licensing procedures described at CR1 S2.

The AGITG has accepted this position but has requested that the UKA Rules for Competition highlight, for ease of reference and to help ensure that best practice is followed, the technical parameters developed by the HCAFs through the AGITG, applicable to individual events that may be organised by competition providers, clubs and coaches who wish to offer such competition. UKA Supplements to Technical Rules 22, 33, 34, 36 and 38 will therefore include details of those parameters (which will also be published on the HCAFs' websites) as guidance.

The above changes have been and continue to be widely communicated by the AGITG, through webinars, drop-in sessions, FAQs and other pages on HCAF websites.

Several further areas are still subject to final agreement within the AGITG and/or between the Rules Advisory Group (and subsequently the UKA Board) and the AGITG, including:

- Some details within TR3 S2 as described above.
- Presentation of maximum/recommended distances for off-track disciplines (TR3 S2 (2), TR3 S2 (3), TR3 S4 and TR3 S5).
- Combined Events for U16 and U14 age groups, i.e. updating TR39 S1, and related scoring tables.

Those are considered less time-critical and will therefore continue to be dealt with through consultation by the AGITG and the normal Rules Advisory Group process, with final approval by the UKA Board in December.

The effective date of the implementation ***remains 1st April 2026***, though the transitional arrangements being put in place by HCAFs have always included the provision of pilot events during the indoor season (and possibly at early outdoor season events). The extent and application of those pilots may vary from HCAF to HCAF for their national indoor championships and the related regional or county-level championships. The provisions of Rule G2 S4 (6) give some potential room for stricter age limits to be applied by Competition Providers, especially at open meetings. Open meetings may, for example, provide a good opportunity for the new technical specifications in sprint hurdles to be trialled. We can see particular merit in U18 hurdles competitions (where there are changes in the hurdle spacings compared with those for U17s under current UKA Rules) being offered, as they have been in the past, with major event selection in mind (given that existing World Athletics Rules contain the required specifications). Concerning hurdle specifications at events for younger age groups (where spacings will not typically change, though hurdle heights may be reduced), the respective event licensing authorities will no doubt consider event licence applications on a case-by-case basis.

UKA Rules Advisory Group
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