



**BRITISH ROWING**

# **Junior Rower and Crew Eligibility Task & Finish Group**

**Summary of Submissions  
November 2025**

**TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT**

## Formal Submissions to T&F Review Panel

The Panel Terms of Reference can be viewed at <https://www.britishrowing.org/task-finish-group-eligibility-for-junior-rowers/>

Only submissions via this route were considered by the T&F Panel.

The window for written submissions was 3rd - 15th October 2026.

### Role

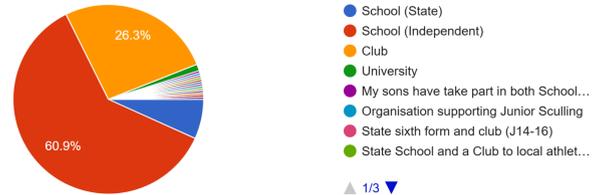
Role Category*	Est. % of responses	For Change	Against Change	Split/Unclear	Net Position	
leadership position	11%	25	4	1	For Change	83%
coach	24%	51	8	5	For Change	80%
parent/guardian	42%	77	23	13	For Change	68%
rower	16%	31	11	1	For Change	72%
other	6%	10	6	1	For Change	59%

\*Where a person holds multiple roles, the highest 'authority' position was counted

### Programme Type

#### Programme Type

266 responses



Programme Category	%	For Change	Against Change	Split/Unclear	Net Result	
Club	44%	22	2	1	For Change	88%
Independent school	40%	18	3	2	For Change	78%
State school	9%	4	1	0	For Change	80%
Other	7%	2	1	1	For Change	50%

### Region / Area

\* **Oxfordshire and Thames area:** The vast majority of responses are concentrated in or around Oxfordshire and the Thames region, including specific mentions like Henley-on-Thames, Oxford, Thames Upper/Upriver, and various parts of the Thames Valley.

\* **London and South East:** The second most frequent areas mentioned are London and the broader South East region, sometimes specified as Greater London or including areas like Surrey or Berkshire.

\* **Northern and North East England:** There is a significant cluster of responses from the Northern and North East regions, with specific mentions of Northumberland and Durham.

\* **Other Regions:** Other areas mentioned include North West, Yorkshire, East/Eastern, East Midlands, West Midlands, Wessex, WAGS (Gloucestershire/Wales), Scotland (Glasgow), and Wales.

### Club Name

The Panel received 266 responses from 57 unique clubs. (For reference, c.270 boat clubs - including schools - declare having junior members)

When aggregating the net position for each club (e.g. 1 against, 2 for change = for change)

**Totals:**  
 For Change = 46 (80.7%)  
 Against Change = 7 (12.2%)  
 Split / Unclear = 4 (7.0%)

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### Your Perspective

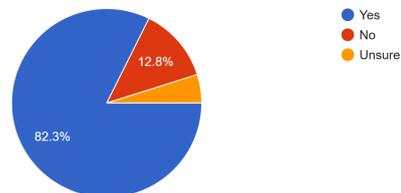
The Task & Finish Group has been asked to examine eligibility rules for junior rowers and crews in domestic competitions. Concerns have been raised regarding the impact of:  
 - A rise in school scholarship and bursary offers driving the recruitment and movement of rowers in school years 11, 12 and 13.

- Inequalities in access to 'Tier 1' competition opportunities for juniors at smaller clubs and schools through the prioritisation of larger boat classes and / or rules prohibiting composite crews.

The purpose of the review is to facilitate a fair and transparent conclusion to the current junior rower eligibility debate and, if required, develop proportionate recommendations which balance the integrity of competition, sustainability of programmes, and the welfare and choice of individual athletes.

**Do you believe these are issues which should be explored?**

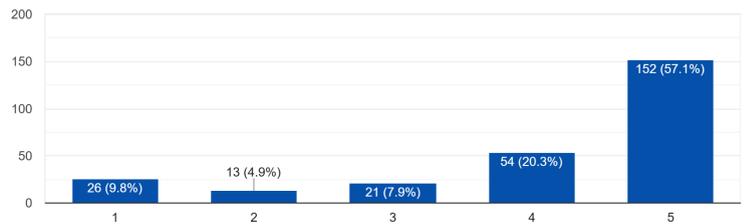
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 266 responses



From your perspective, how important are these issues?

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266 responses



What are the main concerns or challenges you see, and why do you believe these are important (for athletes, parents, clubs, schools, or the sport as a whole)?

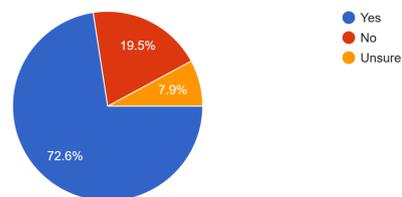
Please answer briefly - bullet points are acceptable.

- \* **Impact on Smaller Clubs and Schools:** The aggressive recruitment of talented J16/J17 athletes, often through scholarships and bursaries, by larger, wealthier schools is severely damaging smaller, community-based clubs and schools, leading to loss of athletes, program collapse, and demotivation of remaining rowers and volunteer coaches.
- \* **Unfair Competition & Elitism:** This recruitment creates an unlevel playing field, where success is perceived to be "bought" rather than being the result of homegrown talent development, reinforcing the perception of rowing as an elitist, pay-to-win sport and discouraging participation from those outside these wealthy institutions.
- \* **Opportunities for Individuals:** Scholarships and bursaries are seen as positive by some, providing life-changing educational and high-level sporting opportunities to talented individuals who would otherwise be unable to access them, and enhancing the overall standard of British rowing.
- \* **Negative Effect on Homegrown Athletes:** Students who have been loyal to their school/club from a younger age feel disillusioned and are often displaced from top crews by incoming scholarship athletes, leading to demotivation and sometimes quitting the sport.
- \* **Need for Regulation:** There is a widespread view that while scholarships may offer opportunities, the current mass-scale recruitment needs to be regulated (e.g., capping the number of scholars in a boat) to ensure fair competition, protect grassroots development, and maintain the integrity of junior rowing as an amateur sport.

Do you believe there is a need for change to the current approach?

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266 responses



Why do you feel that?

Please answer briefly - bullet points are acceptable.

- \* **Competitive Imbalance and Unfairness:** Many respondents feel the current system creates an unfair advantage, where wealthy independent schools "buy" success or "poach" top athletes, leading to dominance in major events, reducing fair competition, and creating a two-tiered system.
- \* **Impact on Smaller Clubs and Coaches:** A significant concern is the detrimental effect on smaller clubs and state school programs, which lose their developed talent, leading to squad collapse, demotivation and loss of volunteer coaches, and long-term harm to the grassroots foundation and junior rowing participation base.
- \* **Scholarships as Opportunity and Accessibility:** Conversely, many feel scholarships and bursaries are vital, life-changing opportunities for talented athletes from less privileged backgrounds, allowing access to better coaching, facilities, and education, and argue that restricting them would limit accessibility and make rowing more elitist.
- \* **Need for regulation/limits:** A strong theme is the need for British Rowing to intervene, with many suggesting a limit/cap (often 25% or similar) on post-16 recruits eligible for national competitions, mirroring policies in other school sports like rugby and football.
- \* **Focus on athlete welfare and choice:** Athletes and parents emphasize the right of young people to choose the environment that best supports their development (academically, personally, and athletically), arguing that restricting movement and scholarships could stifle ambition and reduce opportunity.

What would a positive or successful outcome look like from your perspective?

Please answer briefly - bullet points are acceptable.

- \* **Limiting Recruitment/Scholarships:** The most frequent suggestion is to implement a cap or limit on the number or percentage of recruited, scholarship, or non-'homegrown' athletes allowed in a crew, especially at major events like NSR, HRR, and SHORR. Percentages of 25%, 33%, or 50% are commonly proposed. The aim is to ensure competitive balance and reward programmes that develop their own talent.
- \* **Encouraging Homegrown Talent:** Many respondents believe a successful outcome involves a shift towards school and club programmes relying on and developing 'homegrown' talent from junior levels (J14-J16) onward, rather than 'poaching' or 'buying in' talent post-16.
- \* **Supporting Smaller Clubs:** A positive outcome includes more support, funding, and resources from British Rowing for smaller clubs and regions, allowing them to retain talent and compete effectively. This includes allowing composite crews for smaller clubs to enter larger events.
- \* **Maintaining Opportunities and Clarity:** Some responses argue for maintaining the current system, emphasizing that scholarships provide life-changing opportunities for individuals regardless of background, and that restrictions should not penalise athletes. Calls were also made for clear, transparent, and athlete-centred rules that align with other school sports.

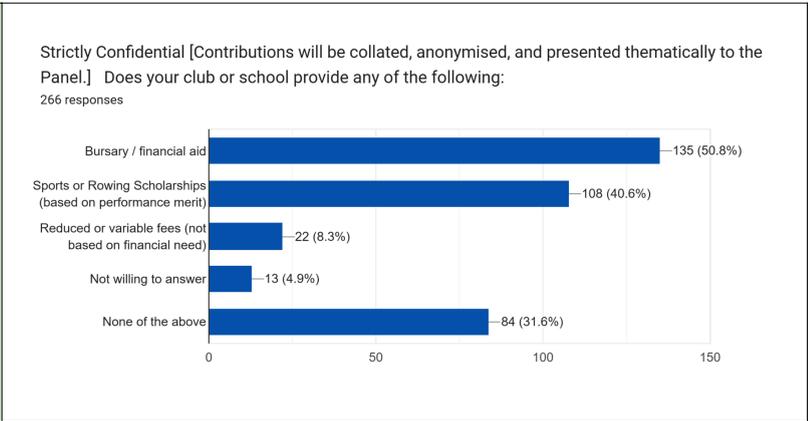
If you have suggestions for how change could be implemented, please share.

Please answer briefly - bullet points are acceptable.

- \* **Implement recruitment/scholarship limits:** The most common suggestion is to cap the number or percentage of recruited/scholarship athletes per crew, typically at 25%, to be enforced at major junior events (HRR, NSR, SHORR). Some suggest a phased introduction or a 75% 'home-grown' requirement, often benchmarking against other school sports like Rugby and Cricket.
- \* **Scholarship/Bursary Adjustments:** Focus scholarships on financial need (means-tested) rather than purely sporting prowess, and consider placing limits on the financial amount or the number of scholarships offered per school/club.
- \* **Focus on grassroots development:** Many respondents recommend strengthening grassroots rowing through increased investment, support for smaller clubs, coach development, and outreach programmes, particularly for state schools, as an alternative or complement to recruitment limits.
- \* **Major events to lead change:** HRR and NSR are frequently cited as the main drivers for change, with the view that rules restricting recruitment or eligibility must be implemented by these events to have a meaningful impact on junior rowing.
- \* **Allow composite crews:** Allowing composite crews, especially for clubs or schools with smaller junior squads or those outside the Thames Valley, is proposed as a way to increase access and competitiveness in larger boat classes and top events.
- \* **Alternative views and implementation notice:** A minority of responses argued against change, stating the current system works well or that limits will have unintended negative consequences, such as restricting opportunities. Those advocating for change often stressed the need for clear rules, monitoring through BR membership data, and providing 2+ years notice for any major rule changes.

**Strictly Confidential**  
 [Contributions will be collated, anonymised, and presented thematically to the Panel.]

**Does your club or school provide any of the following:**



**Strictly Confidential**  
 [Contributions will be collated, anonymised, and presented thematically to the Panel.]

**If you selected any of the above, please briefly describe how your club or school approaches putting this support in place.**

(For example: Who is eligible? Is it only available to current members or part of a recruitment offer? How many bursaries/scholarships are typically offered each year?)

\* **Bursaries (Financial Need):** Bursaries are widely offered, strictly means-tested, and often available to any pupil who meets academic criteria and is in financial need, not just rowers. They can cover a wide range of fees, from a small percentage up to 100%. Many schools link their bursary program to their charitable status and aim to widen access for less advantaged children. Some clubs also offer financial aid or hardship funds to help with fees.

\* **Scholarships (Merit-Based):** Scholarships are generally merit-based, recognising excellence in academics, sport (including rowing), music, or drama. For rowing, they are typically based on performance (e.g., erg/sculling tests) and commitment.

\* **Scholarship Financial Value:** Many scholarships are primarily "honorary," providing recognition, a title, or access to extra support (e.g., S&C, physio, talks) with "no fee reduction" or only a minimal one (e.g., 1-10%). However, some schools offer significant fee reductions (e.g., 25-50%, and in rare cases, up to 100% when combined with a means-tested bursary) with rowing scholarships, which are sometimes seen as recruitment tools.

\* **Eligibility and Recruitment:** Scholarships are offered to both "internal" (current) and "external" (new) students, though some schools focus on one or the other. There are varying opinions on whether these awards are used for recruitment, with some stating they are offered solely on merit/application while others suggest they are used to attract new talent, particularly at Sixth Form.

\* **Number Offered:** The number of awards offered varies significantly; many schools offer a very small, limited number of rowing scholarships (e.g., 1-2 per year), while others, particularly those named in the responses, reportedly offer a much larger volume.

**How would you rate the clarity of this submission process?**

