



BRITISH ROWING

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

**Concluding Document
April 2026**

TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Summary of consultation feedback

Over the course of the review, the Panel sought and received a wide range of views from across the rowing community, including both strong support for change and concerns about potential negative impacts. These perspectives were considered and tested before recommendations were published and further feedback invited.

This report sets out the final outcomes of the Task & Finish Group's work.

A total of 60 respondents provided feedback on the Final Report and Recommendations:

- 30 against (including 15 responses from individuals linked to a single club/school)
- 11 for
- 19 mixed response

These responses came from 25 clubs/schools (plus 6 not stated). The earlier phase, which received 266 submissions, showed strong advocacy for change. This final phase therefore reflects feedback on the Recommendations that did not reflect the initial contributions we received. The feedback on this final phase, where views are more divided, may not reflect the full weight of support for change, possibly due to those supporting change feeling that feedback was not required, making the panel feel a degree of discomfort with the final conclusions of the review.

Headlines

- There is broad agreement that the current situation is creating tension, particularly around athlete movement and access to competition.
- There is support for action in some areas.
- There is not consistent support for the proposed 75% rule as the mechanism, which is the primary point of contention.

Respondents widely recognised this is a complex issue with no perfect solution. Many noted that any approach will involve trade-offs, may have unintended consequences, and is unlikely to satisfy all parts of the sport equally.

There was also recognition that the Panel approached the work in an open and balanced way, even where respondents disagreed with the outcome.

Where there is a consensus

Several themes came through consistently across responses.

- Almost all respondents framed their views around fairness. The disagreement is about how best to achieve it, not whether it is important.
- There was broad support for clearer, more consistent and child-centred guidance, although some questioned how enforceable this would be in practice.
- Most respondents felt composites are necessary, particularly for smaller programmes, but should not become a route to creating advantage. Some felt the proposals did not go far enough to open up the option of composites, while a small number opposed them on the basis they could discourage programme development. Overall, there was support for the recommendation.

- There was a strong and consistent message that any changes must be clear, practical and enforceable, including eligibility definitions and transparent decision-making.
- There was strong support for the recommendation for transitional arrangements to ensure that no child or family is impacted by decisions made before any rule changes are introduced.

Where views diverge

The 75% “developed within programme” rule is the central point of disagreement. Earlier consultation indicated broad support for change, but feedback on the Panel’s recommendations shows less agreement on the 75% rule as the mechanism.

Views on the 75% rule were divided, with clearly articulated arguments both for and against. The points below reflect the range of perspectives, rather than a single prevailing view.

Views of those against the recommendation:

- Those critical of the proposal listed reasons such as:
 - It would restrict athlete choice, legitimate sixth-form movement and mobility.
 - It would lead to a restriction of free trade
 - It would discourage scholarship programmes
 - It would drive recruitment earlier
 - It creates a competitive advantage for large school programmes
- There was also a view that larger independent school programmes have driven the debate to the detriment of the wider sport, and that the recommendations may entrench existing advantages.
- Insufficient scale to the number of responses from the rowing community to justify change. Rather than a process based upon open submissions and testimony, a preference by some for a statistical or referendum based approach.
- Views that the “scholarship arms-race” is not addressed and instead risks penalising legitimate school movement.
- Additional concerns included that smaller programme fragility is not fully considered and that comparisons to other sports are not appropriate. There was also some indirect criticism of the integrity of the Panel and its members.

Views of those in favour of the recommendation:

- Frustration that the experience of different programme types (size, resources, geography) is not well understood across the community.
- That recruiting clubs/schools are not the only ones able to offer life-changing opportunities.

Views across the spectrum of responses:

- A desire for more clarity on implementation, particularly timelines and practical application.
- Recognition that acceptance will depend heavily on how the policy is designed and enforced.
- Calls for clarity on how implementation challenges would be managed, alongside recognition of the strength of feeling and level of lobbying on the issue.

The feedback does not point to universal agreement, but does provide clarity on where there is alignment.

Conclusion

Overall, the feedback suggests support for action in some areas, particularly around clearer guidance and a more workable approach to composite crews. The feedback highlights broad alignment on the issues raised, but less agreement on how they should be addressed.

An observable pattern is that views tended, though not exclusively, to align with programme type.

Respondents linked to clubs and smaller schools were more likely to support the proposed changes, often highlighting the need to protect development pathways and programme cohesion. Respondents linked to medium and larger school programmes were more likely to show divided views, with a higher proportion opposing the rule.

This suggests the consultation reflects structural tensions within the sport, not just differences of opinion on policy design. The debate reflects wider differences in how parts of the sport experience the current system, and it is therefore unlikely that any single solution will satisfy all groups equally.

Proposed next steps

Areas where there appears to be consensus to move forward

- Strengthen transition and recruitment guidance.
- Develop a clear, consistent approach to composite crews, with defined criteria and oversight.
- If there were to be any changes to eligibility, include transitional safeguards in any implementation.

Areas that would benefit from further work as a rowing community

- Whether scholarship and bursary opportunities should be promoted in a clearer and more consistent format to improve transparency and reassurance that a breadth of opportunities exist.
- Whether alternatives to the recommendation of a 75% rule can be found that will promote the principle of within programme development.

These proposed next steps will be shared with the newly created Rowing Committee (a sub-committee of the British Rowing Board), which will take this work forward and determine the appropriate course of action. The Panel has provided opportunities for voices from across the rowing community to be heard and further work is required to fully resolve the identified tensions. The Panel would therefore encourage the Rowing Committee to continue to explore this and not lose momentum in the process.

The Junior Rower and Crew Eligibility Task & Finish Group has completed its work and will disband. The Panel wishes to express its thanks to all those who have contributed to the process.