

The British Beekeepers' Association

Examinations Board



Show Judge Certificate

2025 SYLLABUS AND INFORMATION PACK



BBKA Examinations Board

Application & Assessment Procedure for: The Show Judge Certificate

Applicable for Assessments: 2025

The BBKA Show Judge Assessment aims to provide a goal for those beekeepers who have comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of exhibiting honey and honey bee products. It is designed for those who wish to judge at large, national and international honey shows and have gained considerable experience in entering and obtaining awards in these shows. To be assessed in show judging, candidates will need to demonstrate experience of beekeeping, winning awards and stewarding at major honey shows.

Applying for the Show Judge Certificate

Candidates must hold the BBKA Basic Certificate* together with either BBKA Module Examinations 1 and 2 or the General Husbandry Certificate or equivalents** before applying to commence the show judge training.

Candidates must have been awarded at least 30 prizes of 1st, 2nd or 3rd in open classes with over five entries per class at qualifying shows*** within the last five years. Awards must be in categories 1 and 2 and at least 10 different categories covering 3-18 (see section 4.0 below) to demonstrate a broad knowledge of showing.

Candidates must have acted as steward for at least four BBKA Show Judges. Entries must be in categories 1 and 2 and at least 10 different categories covering 3-18 (see section 4.0 below). It is recommended that these are different Show Judges, but some duplication is acceptable.

Candidates should contact the Examinations Board (EB) Secretary (email: sec.exams@bbka.org.uk) to request an online application form and fee schedule.

On receipt of the online exam application form and fee, the EB Secretary will send candidates an application checklist to record their prize cards and stewarding experience.

A Senior Show Judge Assessor will audit the checklist of previous experience and if this is satisfactory, the EB Secretary will issue candidates with a Show Judge Record Book. If the previous experience is not satisfactory the application fee will be refunded, and candidates should supplement their experience and re-apply.

Candidates will also be provided with the current syllabus, a list of BBKA Show Judges & Show Judge Assessors, a list of qualifying shows and the BBKA booklet 'A Guide for Judges and Exhibitors of Honey and Bee Produce'.

- * BBKA Basic equivalents include Welsh Basic, Scottish Preliminary, Irish Preliminary
- ** General Husbandry equivalents include Scottish Advanced Apiarian, FIBKA Beemaster
- *** Qualifying shows have a BBKA Show Judge and over 100 entries on average over the past three years

Completing the Show Judge Record Book

All assessment requirements should be carried out and recorded in the Show Judge Record Book **within five years of application** and will be **in addition** to those required in the application checklist. Where requirements refer to different categories, candidates should refer to the notes in Section 4. In essence, the EB needs to be satisfied that candidates have a wide knowledge of shows, and the experience gained is not only of a 'local' nature, to be experienced enough to undertake judging commissions at any location they are invited to.

Candidates must be awarded **at least 75 prizes** of third or higher at qualifying honey shows*** in a variety of open classes with over five entries per class. Awards must be in categories 1 and 2 and at least 10 different categories covering 3-18. (This is an additional 75 over and above the 30 needed in Stage 1.) If candidates have more than 30 awards prior to commencing the assessment, awards in the previous five years may count towards the 75 awards and are to be recorded in the Show Judge Record Book. For example, if a candidate has 40 awards prior to getting the record book, the 10 additional will count towards the 75 target providing they are within the qualifying period.

Candidates must act as steward for at least **six** different BBKA Show Judges at qualifying honey shows**. It is recommended that these are different shows, but some duplication is acceptable.

Candidates must provide evidence of having judged a minimum of **five** separate shows. These need not all be qualifying shows*** but:

At least 5 categories (see section 4.0 below) must be judged per show.

Overall, evidence of judging categories 1 or 2 must be included in each assessed judging plus at least 4 from categories 11-18. **Three of these five shows must be assessed by a BBKA Show Judge Assessor at a qualifying show***** and each assessment must be of a standard that the approved BBKA Show Judge Assessor can recommend a pass.

Candidates must record details of at least one other relevant experience. This may be acting as Show Secretary, Chief Steward, Entries Secretary or other tasks involved in setting up a honey show.

The Supervised Judging Assessments:

Candidates should negotiate with the EB Secretary and Show Judge Assessors to arrange a suitable assessment venue for the supervised judging assessments from the approved list of qualifying shows***.

Candidates are to advise the EB Secretary by email to sec.exams@bbka.org.uk at least one month before the show, the intended date, show venue, Show Judge Assessor and Show Secretary who will supervise and facilitate the assessment respectively.

The assessor will be a different BBKA Show Judge Assessor for each of the supervised judging assessments, except when candidates have not achieved the required standard and are repeating a supervised judging assessment.

Candidates will be assessed against the criteria detailed in the syllabus. The Assessor will use a standard assessment form supplied by the Exam Board which, when completed, will be returned to the EB Secretary.

Should the assessment not reach the required standard the approved BBKA Show Judge Assessor will convert the assessment to a tutorial session and candidates must plan for an additional supervised judging assessment. As stated above candidates may well need to do more than three supervised judging assessments.

Candidates may not arrange a supervised judging assessment in any show where they have submitted exhibits or are acting in a show management capacity.

Candidates may not refer to the syllabus or any other document during the assessment.

The completed Show Judge Record Book must be sent to the EB Secretary before the Final Supervised Judging can be arranged. Candidates must speak with the EB Secretary before despatching the record book.

The Final Supervised Judging & Interview

Once all the requirements have been met and the Show Judge Record Book has been received by the EB Secretary, the Final Supervised Judging & Interview will be arranged by the EB Secretary, BBKA Show Judge Assessors and a Show Secretary. At least one month's notice is required for arrangements to be made.

The Final Supervised Judging and Interview will be held at a suitable venue with two BBKA Show Judge Assessors and a Moderator nominated by the EB. The focus of this final assessment will be based on the criteria detailed in the syllabus, the contents of the Show Judge Record Book and the supervised judging assessment reports. The EB Secretary will advise which venues can be used. The results of the Final Supervised Judging and Interview will be sent to the EB Secretary within 2 days of the assessment.

Candidates will be asked to judge at least two classes from any of the 18 categories (picked by the assessors based on the candidates Show Judge Record Book). Candidates will be expected to treat the session as an example of 'open judging'.

Categories

Candidates are required to provide evidence of judging experience gained in categories 1 and 2 and at least 10 of the other categories from the remaining list below.

1. Liquid Honey
2. Granulated Honey and Soft Set Honey
3. Commercial Classes
4. Composite Classes
5. Comb Suitable for Extraction
6. Cut Comb and Sections
7. Mead
8. Wax
9. Candles
10. Honey Cakes and Honey Sweetmeats
11. Other Foodstuffs (inc. Honey-Beer and Honey Vinegar)
12. Photographs
13. Displays
14. Observation Hives
15. Nucleus Hives
16. Heather Honey
17. Microscope Slides
18. Painting and Handicrafts

Results

The EB Secretary will notify candidates of the EB's decision within one calendar month of the Final Supervised Judging and Interview.

If a candidate is not successful, the EB will provide feedback. Candidates will have to pass an additional complete Supervised Judging Assessment to include the failed categories before they can apply again to retake the Final Judging Assessment & Interview. Candidates will need to contact the EB Secretary to re-apply and pay the necessary fee.

Blue Ribbons

Blue Ribbons are awarded by the National Honey Show. BBKA used to administer the process, but this is no longer the case.

Once candidates have obtained their Show Judge Certificate, they wait two years to gain more experience and then they can be invited to judge at the National Honey Show and thereafter be given a stock of NHS certificates. No candidate is entitled to issue Blue Ribbons until this time.

Candidates are to contact the National Honey Show for more information.



The British Beekeepers' Association

Examinations Board Syllabus for Show Judge

1.0 General Information

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 1.1 the need for procedure on being invited to act as a judge (including reference to the show schedule and rules)
- 1.2 the use of their judging equipment, (grading glasses, tasting rods, etc.), with reference to points of hygiene (use of plastic gloves). Judging equipment will be checked against a standard list which is available in the 'BBKA Guide for Judges and Exhibitors of Honey and Honey Bee Products' guidance leaflet.
- 1.3 the various methods of arriving at a decision (points or comparison) summation, elimination and interpretation
- 1.4 the procedure/method at the show bench and in particular systems or sequences of operation, speed and the "weighting" given to flavour, viscosity, cleanliness, etc
- 1.5 the requirement to demonstrate in each of the categories a logical process for judging and the importance of time management in respect of judging the individual classes in the whole honey show scenario
- 1.6 "natural" faults of section honey, cut comb honey and combs suitable for extraction (wax moth, braula, varroa, earwigs)
- 1.7 possible faking. e.g. loose cappings put on open cells, overheating or "cooking" of honey in preparation of samples of honey for the show bench, caramelising of honey, bleaching and adulteration of beeswax
- 1.8 the necessity of good food handling hygiene by judges, stewards and exhibitors
- 1.9 the necessary procedures to put into place when 'open judging' (in the presence of an audience or the public).

2.0 Honey Show Schedule and Rules

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 2.1 the contents of the BBKA Booklet "A Guide for Judges and Exhibitors of Honey and Bee Produce"
- 2.2 the implications of studying the show schedule and show rules before they commence judging the honey and bee products at the show, particularly with reference to the type of jar, weights, sizes, numbers, area of exhibits for displays
- 2.3 the necessity to use standard B D grading glasses, when to replace these glasses due to wear and the necessity to check against the show manager's standard glasses
- 2.4 the rules concerning multiple entries where these are permitted
- 2.5 the general rules concerning the award of challenge cups, trophies and special awards.

3.0 Legal Requirements

Candidates shall:

- 3.1 be aware of the current UK legal requirements for the labelling of jars of honey. Where labels are required to be put on jars of honey e.g. commercial classes and some gift classes, the labels shall be in accordance with the latest legal requirements
- 3.2 be aware of food hygiene requirements governing the preparation of honey and hive products.

4.0 Categories of Exhibits to be Judged

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 4.0.1 the advisability of using the comparative elimination system of judging, except in the composite, display, mead, candles, cakes, observation and nuclei hives and honey sweetmeats classes where a points system must be used
- 4.0.2 the requirement for all exhibits to be scrupulously clean and to downgrade or disqualify as necessary
- 4.0.3 a weight tolerance if one is not specified in the show schedule. If a range is specified in the schedule e.g. 6 to 10 oz., 200 to 300 g etc. then entries falling outside the specified range should be disqualified if out by more than a given tolerance (as decided by the judge)
- 4.0.4 the requirement for jars to be filled to the correct level
- 4.0.5 the requirement for lids to be free from blemish, rust and corrosion.

4.1 Liquid Honey

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 4.1.1 the different types of honey
- 4.1.2 the correct use of standard B D grading glasses.

4.2 Granulated Honey and Soft Set Honey

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 4.2.1 the difference between naturally granulated honey and soft set honey and the requirement for the honey to have dry tops with no scum and that fine granulation is preferred to coarse.

4.3 Commercial Honey (Multi Jar Classes)

Candidates shall be aware:

- 4.3.1 that the labelling conforms to present legislation
- 4.3.2 that the exhibit conforms to schedule requirements
- 4.3.3 of the need for tamper proof strips legal/non-legal requirements.

4.4 Composite Class

Candidates shall:

- 4.4.1 use a designed marking sheet
- 4.4.2 judge by summation method
- 4.4.3 judge items in order of depth of flavour
- 4.4.4 judge each exhibit to schedule
- 4.4.5 submit marking sheets.

4.5 Comb Suitable for Extraction

Candidates shall:

- 4.5.1 check the cleanliness in all comb honey. There will be no signs of braula, varroa, wax moth or earwigs
- 4.5.2 ensure there is no granulation or fermentation in all comb honey
- 4.5.3 check for complete cleanliness of the woodwork of comb honey
- 4.5.4 check that sugar syrup feeding has not been used to complete the filling of combs. If detected the exhibit shall be disqualified
- 4.5.5 check for cappings placed over empty cells
- 4.5.6 check for the presence of pollen cells and/or more than one type of honey in a comb leading to the comb being downgraded compared to those of one honey type and no pollen.

4.6 Cut Comb and Sections

Candidates shall:

- 4.6.1 check the cleanliness in all comb honey, especially in cut comb and sections where there will be no signs of braula, varroa or wax moth
- 4.6.2 ensure there is no granulation or fermentation in all comb honey
- 4.6.3 check for complete cleanliness of the woodwork of sections and the plastic container of cut comb honey
- 4.6.4 check that sugar syrup feeding has not been used to complete the filling of combs. If detected the exhibit shall be disqualified
- 4.6.5 check for cappings placed over empty cells
- 4.6.6 check for the presence of pollen cells and/or more than one type of honey in a comb leading to the comb being downgraded compared to those of one honey type and no pollen
- 4.6.7 check that the weight is to schedule
- 4.6.8 check there is no packing of honey (placed underneath the cut comb) used to meet the specified weight.

4.7 Mead

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 4.7.1 the details in the show schedule concerning the type of bottle and cork, and the permitted ingredients used in the preparation of mead
- 4.7.2 the difference between dry mead and sweet mead
- 4.7.3 the mead being clear with virtually no sediment in the bottom of the bottle and having no secondary fermentation
- 4.7.4 other "meads" such as melomel, metheglin, cyser, pyment and sparkling mead
- 4.7.5 the alternate methods of judging mead classes such as summation.

4.8 Wax

Candidates shall:

- 4.8.1 ensure that the weight is in accordance with the show schedule
- 4.8.2 understand that the wax may be polished or unpolished
- 4.8.3 understand and ensure that adulteration or bleaching will be heavily down graded
- 4.8.4 understand that if the exhibitor uses wooden show cases that the aroma of the wax may be affected by the aroma of the wooden show case and to downgrade as necessary
- 4.8.5 understand that the top of the wax will have a flat surface, which is achieved by cooling at the correct temperature
- 4.8.6 ensure the wax is perfectly clean and that there shall be no foreign bodies and to downgrade or disqualify as necessary
- 4.8.7 understand the colour should be 'primrose' yellow.
- 4.8.8 understand the causes of discoloration or darkening of beeswax
- 4.8.9 understand the effects of aging on items of wax.

4.9 Candles

Candidates shall:

- 4.9.1 ensure that the candles must be made of pure beeswax and be prepared, moulded, poured, dipped or rolled in accordance with the show schedule
- 4.9.2 light one candle to check burning, indicating the correct sizing of the wick, unless specifically required not to do so by the show schedule
- 4.9.3 observe if there is smoke when the candle is burning
- 4.9.4 understand the “weighting” to be given to the method of production
- 4.9.5 understand the importance of wick size and the effect that a wrong size wick may have been used
- 4.9.6 judge by summation.
- 4.9.7 check for length and diameter by ruler and calliper
- 4.9.8 the health and safety requirements of lit candles.

4.10 Honey Cakes and Honey Sweetmeats

Candidates shall be aware that:

- 4.10.1 the cake and sweetmeats will be in accordance with the show schedule
- 4.10.2 the cake should not have sunk in the middle and if fruit is used in the recipe, it should not have fallen to the bottom
- 4.10.3 the cake will be cut in half with a suitable knife to check the texture
- 4.10.4 the cake and sweetmeats shall be tasted for honey flavour and the aroma noted. The correct method of checking for aroma and method of cutting for tasting should be used
- 4.10.5 an ingredients list and recipe are required if not in the show schedule, check schedule carefully.

4.11 Other Foodstuffs (including Honey-beer and Honey Vinegar)

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 4.11.1 the details in the show schedule concerning the type of bottle and cork, and the permitted ingredients used in the preparation of beers and vinegars
- 4.11.2 the beers and vinegars being clear with virtually no sediment in the bottom of the bottle and having no secondary fermentation
- 4.11.3 the alternate methods of judging classes such as summation.

4.12 Displays

Candidates shall be aware:

- 4.12.1 that this is the class in any honey show that is the least defined and that they must check very carefully the details in the show schedule
- 4.12.2 that they must check all items for cleanliness, purity, aroma and flavour, and the mead, beeswax, honey and comb honey is as detailed in the previous sections on these items
- 4.12.3 of the particular methods of judging that may have to be employed in this class, such as the attractiveness and educational value of the display often needs to be taken into consideration.

4.13 Photographs**Candidates shall be aware of:**

- 4.13.1 the sharpness of focus of the subject and the method used by photographers
- 4.13.2 the composition and interpretation of the photograph required in the schedule
- 4.13.3 the subject of the photograph
- 4.13.4 the originality of the photograph and to be aware of cheating by using downloaded images
- 4.13.5 the contrast
- 4.13.6 any narrative if applicable
- 4.13.7 the sizes of print and mount are as defined in the schedule.

4.14 Observation Hives**Candidates shall be aware:**

- 4.14.1 of the welfare of the bees. This is of paramount importance and if any distress is visible through overcrowding in observation hives this must be rectified immediately by the Show Judge or Show Secretary
- 4.14.2 they will be judged for educational purposes
- 4.14.3 that all items in the hive must be labelled with labels placed on the outside of the hive
- 4.14.4 that the queen will be marked with the correct year
- 4.14.5 that water must be available and not just honey or sugar syrup for the bees
- 4.14.6 there must be adequate ventilation built into the observation hive construction
- 4.14.7 that the bees shall be allowed to fly if this is permissible
- 4.14.8 of the presence of any notifiable pests or diseases will disqualify the exhibit
- 4.14.9 there are alternative methods of judging the observation hive
- 4.14.10 of the health and safety requirements of using observation hives with the public.

4.15 Nucleus Hives**Candidates shall understand that nucleus hives shall:**

- 4.15.1 demonstrate brood in all stages of development
- 4.15.2 have 3 to 6 combs covered with bees, including drones
- 4.15.3 have some sealed honey
- 4.15.4 have combs of good condition
- 4.15.5 have written records of the colony details
- 4.15.6 have bees of good temperament.

4.16 Heather Honey**Candidates shall be aware of:**

- 4.16.1 the difference between ling heather honey and bell heather honey and be able to demonstrate a method of judging ling heather honey indicating the means of determining its quality and characteristics
- 4.16.2 how to look for and find bricks, crystal clusters or partial granulation
- 4.16.3 how to judge for thixotropic level of heather honey
- 4.16.4 the use of illumination to look at the quality of the exhibit
- 4.16.5 the need for the honey to be higher in the jar to compensate for the presence of air bubbles.

4.17 Microscope Slides

Candidates shall be aware of:

- 4.17.1 the neatness of slide including the description
- 4.17.2 the quality of mounting. To be bubble free
- 4.17.3 the correct staining to suit the exhibit
- 4.17.4 the conformance to the schedule.
- 4.17.5 the effort required in producing the type of slide exhibited (pollen slide vs anatomy slide).

4.18 Paintings and Handicrafts

Candidates shall:

- 4.18.1 judge against schedule
- 4.18.2 allow for the age of the exhibitor
- 4.18.3 judge for interpretation of the handicraft
- 4.18.4 judge the composition and interpretation of the painting
- 4.18.5 judge for the craftsmanship and originality of the production.

Version November 2024

Replaces version January 2024 (reviewed with no syllabus changes)

The British Beekeepers' Association
National Beekeeping Centre
Stoneleigh Park
Kenilworth
CV8 2LG
sec.exams@bbka.org.uk

Charity No: 1185343