



Scottish
Swimming

National Squad Programme

Selection Policy & Selection Times

2015 - 2016

Introduction

This paper sets out the principles guiding selection to Scottish Swimming Squads for the season 2015-16 and the overall direction of travel for the coming years. The document incorporates the outcomes of the review process concluded following the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

In revising the previous documentation, which itself was regularly updated from the original policy rationale in 2006¹, several sources of information were used;

1. Swimmer tracking process 2006-2014 – a comprehensive appraisal of swimmer progress through the squad system to their highest achievement level.²
2. Event depth research 2008-2014 – evaluation of the Top 25 GB rankings by gender, event and age each season.³
3. Performance Review 2014 – independently chaired, encompassing the views of swimmers, coaches, support staff and Scottish Swimming staff.⁴
4. Coaches Technical Panel minutes 2008-2014
5. Leadership Group feedback 2012-2014
6. National Swimming Committee feedback

Background Context

Scottish Swimming has operated a progressive series of National Squads for several years as part of what we now call the “Swimmer Pathway”. These have been questioned, challenged, refined and shaped continuously, however they have been a constant in the swimming landscape for over two decades. In recent years, initiatives such as Mindset and Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) have influenced the policies guiding selection for squads. In addition to this, developmental projects such as Pathway to Performance, Flying Start and DRP have superseded the previously used District Squad structure for younger swimmers.

The selection policy & rationale document update (2009) stated that;

“The development of swimmers cannot be rushed and each athlete must be supported as an individual. A swimmer should improve over a range of abilities initially, and focus on specific events only when reaching a higher level of performance. Selections should be structured so that the appropriate physical development will be encouraged at the appropriate time.

Whatever the prevailing mood is in youth sport development or academic research, this statement is still a fitting description of what underpins our current thinking. Investment from sportscotland and the Scottish Swimming membership has been secured for the next cycle and we need to build on the successes of recent years taking into account lessons learned and feedback received.

Throughout the period of the previous Performance Plan, Scottish Swimming has developed the inclusive nature of our national squad structures with a view to providing a progressive development pathway for Scottish para-swimmers. Para-swimmers have been included in each of the three levels of squad structures (Gold, Silver and Bronze) at both junior and senior level over the last four year cycle. The explicit inclusion of para-swimming within this policy confirms Scottish

¹ Scottish Swimming National Squad Selection Policy Rationale, 2006

² The swimmer tracking exercise was completed on all swimmers who achieved National Squad selection times since 2008. A summary is included within Appendix 5.

³ Event depth research illustrates trends in performance development across all events and ages within the British top 25. A summary and examples are shown in Appendix 6.

⁴ A summary of relevant recommendations is presented in Appendix 7.

Swimming's continued commitment to the development of our para-swimmers and para-swimming pathway.

Another exciting season of both domestic and international swimming has demonstrated that global standards continue to move forward in both Olympic and Paralympic swimming. Furthermore, there also continues to be positive progress in Scotland in terms of our swimmers achieving better outcomes in the British and World rankings. As we develop our system and drive expectations upward, we need to focus on supporting our existing world-class swimmers and enhancing the long-term swimmer pathway.

The numbers shown in the table below represent the qualifying statistics for each of the squads over the past three (3) years. The figures show a reduction in numbers at Silver and Bronze level having applied a tightening of times over this period. Careful and further consideration around the numbers targeted and selected at the development stages is now required and will be reviewed on an annual basis. Furthermore, there is an ongoing need to consider capacity in the delivery of quality support to swimmers and coaches. There is a finite amount of resource (e.g. science, medicine and ancillary resources) available - and consequently overall numbers within each squad need to be considered.

Squad Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Bronze (11-14)	382	287	228
Bronze (15+)	60	55	41
Silver (13-16)	66	57	44
Gold (14-16)	27	17	24
Silver (17+)	32	29	20
Gold (17+)	31	39	36

Selection Policy Principles

Taking all of this into account, the following principles will underpin the selection policy for Scottish Swimming Squads 2015-16:

1. The policy is aimed at identifying swimmers progressing towards and expected to meet the specific Performance Plan target of 6-8 swimmers in the Top 16 world rankings (2 per nation) each year. In order to maintain consistency with previous policies, world top 15 times have been used to calculate base times and for this policy, these have been generated using an average top 15 placing from years 2011 - 2014 in the world rankings (2 per nation).
2. To reflect changing standards in world swimming, base times will be re-calculated on an annual basis.
3. The age for peak performance in an event continues to be used as a factor in generating base times and these have been recalculated using the average age of swimmers in the world top 15 from 2011 - 2014.
4. Having reduced the percentage gap between Bronze/Silver times and the Gold times over the past three years, the gap between will now remain the same with the expectation that this will continue until the 2017-18 season. Times will however be faster due to the re-calibration of Senior Gold. This will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.
5. At age 17+, selection for Senior Gold and Senior Silver will use a combination of time based achievement and qualitative assessment.
6. A "broader-based" approach will be applied at younger ages (DRP) in order to allow for natural growth and development on an individual basis.
7. Distinctions for boys and girls, reflecting the trend in sport more widely will be applied to selection and squad programming to recognise gender differences in maturity and development.
8. Open Water will continue to be within the selection policy

9. Para-swimmers achieving selection criteria to the Scottish Talent Programme (STP) will be included within a squad suitable to their level of performance and development.
10. The STP times (contained within appendix 1) have been calculated utilising a progressive scale from World Class Podium qualifying standards.
11. Mindset assessment will play an increasing role within the selection policy and process.
12. The National Coach, in consultation with the Performance Director, will apply a discretionary approach to selection, ensuring that a measure of professional judgement is used to support potential across the pathway. Please see the “Discretionary Selections” section for details of how this approach will be applied.

Summary of changes to Selection Policy for 2015-16

General

- The selection ‘window’ qualification dates have been altered in line with the new competition calendar and to reflect the need for peak performances to be achieved at specified and planned competitions.
- The requirement for swimmers to achieve times in a specific number of events corresponding to each level has been modified according to the progression rates evidenced in the review process.
- Boys’ and girls’ criteria have been separated for the purposes of illustrating our commitment to gender specificity in selections.
- The age criteria for boys and girls have been altered in line with the gender split.
- Inclusion of the Scottish Talent Programme selection criteria for para-swimmers within the selection document.;

Levels

- Taking into account the above, alongside the outcome of recalibrating base times, Gold (14+ boys & 13+ girls), Silver (13+ boys & 12+ girls) and Bronze times (15+), have been tightened.
- Bronze (11-14, DRP) times will remain the same for 2015/16 selections and will be reviewed again at the end of this season.
- For swimmers aged 17+, standards have been tightened to an absolute measure rather than by age⁵. Those not achieving the required standard will be evaluated through a qualitative assessment in line with the areas described within the section headed “Discretionary Selections”.
- An additional factor applied for Gold & Silver aged 17+ qualification will be a much narrower window for achieving times, i.e. at specific selection Meets where performances have been planned for and delivered.

Discretionary Selections

- In order to apply a measure of professional judgement to the selection process, a system of “discretionary” selections is being introduced for 2015-16. These are the responsibility of the National Coach in conjunction with the Performance Director. It is important to recognise that swimmers do not progress in a linear fashion year-by-year and therefore inclusion of a discretionary process allows flexibility in safeguarding anyone who may drop out of the system. In addition, this allows qualitative assessment of potential outwith the time standards.
- Due to the complex nature of the para-swimming landscape, discretionary selections will be applied allowing professional judgement to ensure athletes who have achieved selection to the Scottish Talent Programme are best supported in the most appropriate squad for their development.

⁵ The Senior Gold, Senior Silver and Senior Bronze (17+) standards will be the calculated 20 year old times on the performance curve

‘Mindset’

A few years ago, Scottish Swimming, in conjunction with the sportscotland Institute of Sport, took the innovative step of introducing the concept of ‘Mindset’ to the lower tiers of the National Squads Selection Policy (see Appendix 4 for additional explanation of ‘Mindset’). This was done to highlight the importance of swimmers developing a ‘growth mindset’, and to encourage coaches to create a ‘growth mindset’ environment in their clubs and programmes. This work has been received positively by both coaches and swimmers. As the swimmers who have already been introduced to ‘mindset’ now begin to move into the upper tiers of the National Squad programme, it is imperative that the ‘mindset’ work continues as they develop further as athletes.

As such, the following will now apply:

- ‘Mindset’ will now feature as a primary element of the delivery programme to all Scottish National Squads for both swimmers and coaches
- ‘Mindset’ will remain a key theme in the DRP/Youth Development Squad programmes and selection process and will be extended to the selection process for Youth and Senior Squads (*please refer to the General Selection Notes for additional explanation of this point.*)
- Seminars and open sessions for parents will continue to be held in each District to further explain ‘Mindset’ in more detail.

Level and Ages

Swimmers are able to attain the three different levels of achievement (Gold, Silver, Bronze) at the following ages:

Level	Boys Age	Girls Age
Gold	14yrs+	13yrs+
Silver	13yrs+	12yrs+
Bronze	11yrs+	11yrs+

The age differential for Gold and Silver squads supports the recognition of the gender split noted in the principles of selection. The entry age for Bronze (DRP) is maintained at 11+ for boys and girls to enable a broad based approach to selecting and supporting potential.

Number of Times Required

It is widely recognised in effective long-term swimmer development planning that successful senior swimmers undergo a good background of multi-event aerobic training in their formative years. In order to continue promoting this practice among Scottish swimmers and coaches, swimmers are required to achieve selection times in one or more 200 metre or longer events from ages 11 through to 15. From 16 years onwards, swimmers are able to achieve the selection times in any event distance. Please note also that swimmers will only be able to achieve times in 50m events from age 16 upwards, and at the age of 16 only one 50m time can be used.

Within the para-swimming pathway, due to classification restrictions, there is a limitation on the number of events which are recognised as Paralympic championships events. Athletes will, therefore, be considered for selection on achieving one selection time regardless of stroke or distance. Athletes will, however, be encouraged to compete over a range of strokes and distances and the range of events in which times have been achieved will be considered when allocating swimmers to a National Squad.

Number of Times Required

Age	Gold		Silver		Bronze	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
17+	1*	1*	1*	1*	1*	1*
16 †	2 (max 1 x 50m event)	2 (max 1 x 50m event)	2 (max 1 x 50m event)	2 (max 1 x 50m event)	2 (max 1 x 50m event)	2 (max 1 x 50m event)
For 11-15 years selection events must include 1 swim from 2 of the following 3 categories – 50m events excluded: <u>Freestyle, Form, I.M.</u>						
15 †	3 (min 1 @ 200+)	3 (min 1 @ 200+)	3 (min 1 @ 200+)	3 (min 1 @ 200+)	3 (min 1 @ 200+)	3 (min 1 @ 200+)
14 †	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)
13 †	N/A	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)
12 †	N/A	N/A	N/A	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)
11 †	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4 (min 2 @ 200+)	4 (min 2 @ 200+)

200+ = all 200m, 400m, 800m and 1500m events.

Example: A swimmer aiming to achieve Gold level at 16 years needs to achieve 2 Gold times in any two events, but only one 50m time can be used.

*** Senior 17+**

- Senior 17+ - swimmers achieving times in 50m events only will not be guaranteed selection, performances across 100m or 200m time (long course, same stroke as the 50m event) will also be taken in to consideration before selection.

† 11-14yrs Bronze and Silver 12 – 16yrs Girls and 13 – 16yrs Boys

- Swimmers will only be selected following the completion of the Mindset assessment questionnaire by the respective club Head Coach.

Ages as at 31st December 2015

Important Notes:

Achieving the selection standards does not guarantee a swimmer a place on a Scottish Swimming National Squad; however, all swimmers achieving the identified selection standards will be **considered** for respective places.

- Final selection to the various National Squads is subject to, (1) maximum number limits as determined each year by the Director of Performance & National Coach, and (2) financial resources available to Scottish Swimming at the time of selection.
- Support services from the sportscotland Institute of Sport Network are not obligatory at any level and are subject to agreement from the Swimming High Performance Group.

Discretionary Selections

Appreciating that delivering successful results on the international stage is both a difficult and highly complex process, Scottish Swimming has taken the view that it is important that all swimmers who demonstrate the capability to do this receive the support they require. It is recognised that some circumstances will inevitably arise whereby it is necessary for the National Coach, in consultation with the Performance Director, to place a swimmer within the appropriate level of the National Programme according to their developmental need, not necessarily their chronological age. This may include swimmers being offered National Squad positions which are both above or below that which they have achieved consideration times. It may also include swimmers being selected for squads without achieving a consideration time. This is a departure from the previous policy and is designed to apply a measure of professional judgement towards assessing swimmer potential.

When acting in these discretionary situations, the following will be reviewed:

- Past, current and planned level of training, including the daily training environment
- Rate of performance progression
- Achievement (or otherwise) of previously agreed targets
- Number and nature of qualifying times required and achieved
- Current level of support and the duration of support provided and required
- Percentage away from selection times (present and future)
- Mindset
- Chronological, developmental and training age of the swimmer
- Discussion with home coach on some or all of the above factors

All selected swimmers will be required to sign and abide by the Scottish Swimming Swimmer Code of Conduct.

Eligibility

All swimmers wishing to be considered for Youth Development, Youth Gold or Senior Gold/Silver/Bronze National Squad selection must be eligible to compete for Scotland as defined by Company Rule 4.5.3

(<http://www.scottishswimming.com/media/1400877/2015-2016-Governance-Documents-Issue-7.pdf>) and be registered with SASA having paid their current registration fee.

APPENDIX 5

Swimmer Tracking Exercise Summary

The swimmer tracking process (2006-2014) is a comprehensive appraisal of swimmer progress through the squad system to their highest achievement level. It was undertaken by Scottish Swimming as part of a wide-ranging exercise to evaluate the effectiveness of the squad system and selection process.

The “Swimmer Tracking Exercise” is an ongoing piece of work and to date in excess of 1800 swimmers have been monitored with progress trends identified as summarised below;

1. There is a clear pathway through the squads with evidence of the progressive, structured approach operating effectively, e.g. all of the Scottish based Youth Silver Squad (2014-15) entered the pathway previously at DRP.
2. Progress rates vary;
 - a. Some swimmers make expected, conventional advances upwards through the squads on an annual basis, e.g. a male swimmer entered DRP in season 2008-09 and ascended through Youth Silver, Youth Gold, Senior Silver to Senior Gold in season 2014-15
 - b. Some swimmers accelerate their improvement ‘bypassing’ a squad as they progress, e.g. a female swimmer entered DRP in 2012-13, progressed to Youth Silver the following year and is now in Senior Gold (2014-15)
 - c. Occasionally, due to later development, swimmers enter the National Squad Structure later, e.g. a male swimmer entered at Senior Bronze in 2011-12 for one season and has been in Senior Gold since
3. The average duration spent in Gold Squad towards peak performance is five (5) years.
4. The current Senior Gold Squad (2014-15) have all progressed through the pathway at some stage of their development, i.e. all Senior Gold level athletes have spent time in a developmental squad at some stage (with the exception of those not previously eligible for selection).

APPENDIX 6

Event Depth Research Summary

This extensive piece of work details the statistical analysis of Scottish swimmers in the GB Top 25 rankings by age, gender and event since 2008.

A summary of the key findings is illustrated below;

1. Currently Scottish male swimmers occupy 26.8% of GB Open rankings with female swimmers inhabiting 20.8%. Both of these figures have increased in the 7 years studied.
2. Examining the rankings by age shows improvements over the period since 2008. Scottish swimmers tend to appear fewer times in the younger age groups and steadily increase in number in the rankings as they get older. This is evidence of a sound developmental strategy where performance improves as the swimmers get older.
3. Certain strokes and events feature more prominently than others, e.g. currently men's breaststroke is the 'best' statistical performer in the open rankings and girl's IM is the strongest contemporary event in the age group rankings. These examples are for illustration only and abbreviated for the purposes of this Appendix.
4. There is strong supporting evidence of the correlation between the Scottish Swimming squad structure and performance in the GB rankings, e.g. more than 90% of men & women in the GB Open rankings are in Gold or Silver squads.
5. In the Age Group rankings, there are several positive trends verifying the approach taken by Scottish Swimming in the developmental squad structure;
 - a. At age 14, 70% of Youth and YDS squad members make it into the Age Group Top 25. By Age 18 this increases to 97%.
 - b. At Age 14 around 72% of Scottish swimmers in the Top 25 are already in the squad structure. This increases to over 80% at age 15, 16 and 17.

APPENDIX 7

Performance Review Summary of Recommendations

The Performance Plan, 2006 – 2014 was reviewed in the period January – June 2014, with additional reflection after the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The group undertaking the review was independently chaired, and all stakeholders were included in the evaluation process. Recommendations were submitted to the Scottish Swimming Board for consideration.

The bullet points below are the key outcomes of the review with particular relevance to this policy document.

1. Consistency of support – continue to support the performance framework with a progressive series of squads, based on learning and challenge for swimmers and coaches.
2. Consistency of approach – continue to identify swimmers in a systematic, development based manner with evidence based decision making at its core.
3. Sharper focus on “elite” performance – set challenging standards at the highest level towards meeting the outcome of 6-8 swimmers ranked in the world top 16 each year. Provide world-class, bespoke support to these swimmers and their coaches.
4. Improved technical focus – develop and target improvement in key technical areas towards supporting the achievement of improved performances across the swimmer pathway.
5. Quality coaching - coaching remains central to the development process - supporting the learning and development of quality coaches through effective education and learning opportunities remains a priority. As does increasing the capacity of coaches to become more knowledgeable and better decision makers.
6. Emphasis on female development – develop a targeted programme aimed at improving female swimmers across the pathway.