

Gymnastics New Zealand Judge Development Framework

July 2026

A strategic framework to support clear judging pathways, sustainable workforce development, and consistent judging across gymnastics in New Zealand.



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Introduction and Purpose

The Judge Development Framework provides a comprehensive approach to judge education and development within gymnastics in New Zealand. It outlines a clear, shared direction for the education, development, and sustainability of judges across the sport. The framework covers:

Judge qualifications

The structure and progression of formal judge certifications

Progression pathways

Development opportunities at regional, national, and international levels

Workforce support systems

Recruitment, retention, mentoring, and ongoing professional development

This framework sets out the key principles, focus areas, and intended initiatives that will guide future planning and prioritisation for Gymnastics New Zealand in partnership with Technical Committees. It is designed to:

- clarify judging pathways and highlight progression opportunities
- respond to known challenges in recruiting, retaining, and supporting judges
- support consistent, high-quality judging across all levels of the sport

The framework comprises several interrelated initiatives, which will be developed and implemented over the next five years. Planning priorities, organisational resource and the Olympic cycle will influence the timing of delivery.

To ensure the framework remains current and effective, GNZ will implement a regular review process, with updates occurring every four years in consultation with the relevant Technical Committees.

This document provides a strategic overview and is not intended to prescribe detailed operational processes. Specific initiatives, timelines, benchmarks, and targets will be developed and refined through staged implementation and ongoing consultation.

"Clear pathways, structured support, and ongoing development opportunities ensure judges are equipped to deliver high-quality judging."

How to use this document

This document is intended for use by Gymnastics New Zealand (GNZ), Technical Committees, affiliated clubs, and the judging community as a shared reference point for the future development of judging in New Zealand.

It should be used to inform decision-making and prioritisation of judge education initiatives, support consistent understanding of judging pathways and principles and guide collaboration across GNZ, Technical Committees, and clubs.

As the framework is implemented, supporting documents, policies, and operational guidance will be developed separately where required.



Guiding Principles for Judge Development

The implementation of the Judge Development Framework will be guided by the following principles:

Integrity and Fairness

Judging must uphold the highest standards of integrity, impartiality, and fairness to ensure athletes are assessed consistently and in accordance with the rules of the sport.

Transparency of Pathways and Processes

Judge qualification pathways, development opportunities, and selection processes will be clearly defined and communicated to ensure transparency and accessibility for all judges.

Consistency and Quality

Judge education and expectations will be applied consistently across regions and gymnastics disciplines to support reliable, high-quality judging at all levels of competition.

Development and Sustainability

The framework will support the ongoing development, engagement, and wellbeing of judges to ensure a sustainable judging workforce that can support the future growth of gymnastics in New Zealand.



Background

The need to review and enhance the existing Judge Education Framework was initially identified through feedback gathered from post-course evaluations and discussions with the Technical Committees. In addition, findings from the 2021 Independent Review highlighted the importance of adopting a more cohesive and forward-looking approach to judge education and development.

Judging in gymnastics, particularly at the international level, is governed by World Gymnastics (formerly the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique – FIG) and operates on a four-year Olympic cycle aligned with the Olympic Games. This cycle determines the timing of rule updates and qualification changes that impact judging at all levels of the sport.

In New Zealand, domestic judging cycles are currently aligned with these international timelines to ensure consistency with global standards and to maintain relevance within the sport. The extent of change between cycles is influenced by updates to World Gymnastics regulations, as well as any modifications to national programmes or competition rules.

The timing of these changes every four years often requires a significant amount of work within a relatively short timeframe to update educational resources, course content, and supporting materials. As this timing currently occurs as the changes are applied in the year immediately following the change. This has highlighted the need for clearer and more transparent pathways and processes, both in the development of judge education programmes and in supporting the progression of judges at national and international levels.

Clubs frequently face challenges in recruiting and retaining enough judges with the appropriate qualifications, limiting their ability to adequately support gymnasts at competitions. In addition, judging at events requires a significant volunteer time commitment, often in environments that are not always experienced as supportive or welcoming. This has led to negative experiences for some judges, which can contribute to disengagement from the sport.

The Judge Development Framework responds to these challenges by providing a structured and sustainable approach to judge education, progression, and support across all levels of gymnastics in New Zealand.

Structure of framework

The Judge Development Framework is structured around three key pillars, developed in response to the challenges identified in the Background section. These pillars support the development, sustainability, and quality of judging within gymnastics in New Zealand, and provide the foundation for initiatives that strengthen judge education, support progression pathways, and ensure a sustainable judging workforce.

The three pillars of the framework are:

- Judge Pathways – establishing clear qualification and progression pathways from entry-level judging through to national and international accreditation.
- Recruitment and Retention – implementing strategies to attract new judges and support the ongoing engagement of existing judges across all regions and gymnastics disciplines.
- Mentoring and Support – providing structured mentoring, feedback, and development opportunities to build capability, confidence, and consistency in judging practice.

The pillars are described over the following pages. Each pillar and its components will be delivered through separate work initiatives.



1. Judge Pathways

This pillar sets out clear qualification and progression pathways for judges, from entry-level training through to national appointments and international (Brevet) accreditation.

The Judge Pathway serves as a visual and practical roadmap that outlines the steps required to qualify and judge at both domestic and international levels. It is designed to help judges clearly understand the progression process, when revalidation occurs, how judges qualify for national events and how to pursue international accreditation.

a. Qualification Pathway

Each gymnastics discipline, including all Gym for All and competitive codes, will have a clearly defined qualification pathway. This pathway will outline the progression from foundation levels through to advanced qualifications, typically following the sequence of Foundation, Elementary, Junior, Senior, and International (Brevet) levels.

The pathway will also outline:

- Prerequisites for each level (e.g., age, experience, prior certifications).
- Assessment methods and timings (e.g., theory exams, practical exams, exam after the course).
- Post-course requirements - logbook.
- Opportunities for enhancing training such as additional workshops or shadow judging at competitions.
- Work on this initiative has been in place previously; the objective is to ensure pathways are clear and communicated to the community.

b. Ongoing education

To maintain and enhance their qualifications, judges are highly encouraged to participate in ongoing professional development. Continuing education ensures judges remain current with rule changes, best practice, and evolving standards within the sport. Ongoing professional development may include, but is not limited to, rules updates and briefings, formal courses or workshops, online learning modules, mentoring or judge development activities, and other education opportunities recognised by GNZ.

c. Revalidation of Qualification and Update of Resources

Following each Olympic cycle, international rule changes are introduced which often flow into domestic programmes. In New Zealand, some gymnastics code programmes may also be updated during this period.

These changes create the need to revalidate judging qualifications every four years to ensure judges are applying the most up-to-date rules.

Historically, the timing of rule changes and the delivery of international judging courses has put significant pressure on the system to have judges at all levels ready for the first competitions of a new cycle.

To improve this process, GNZ will:

Establish clear timelines for the redevelopment and rollout of updated educational resources to make revalidation process as smooth as possible for GNZ and judging community.

- Align timelines with programme and judging cycles.
- Provide structured delivery of updated materials and training.

Regularly review and update judge education content to ensure consistency of judging across the country. This will result in resources which show current routine requirements and ensure there is consistent messaging.

- Reflect changes in rules, best practices, and judging standards.
- Update both participant and facilitator resources.
- Provide regular opportunities for updates.

Develop or refresh education materials for each judging cycle.

- Incorporate updated delivery methods and learning formats.
- Support judges in acquiring and maintaining required knowledge and skills.

d. Pathway to National Events

GNZ will implement a transparent and structured process for the selection of judges to judge at national events, considering the following key factors:

The specific needs of each gymnastics discipline

The availability of judges

- Judges' current qualification levels
- Judges' experience at regional events in previous years
- The location of national events

A clear pathway will be outlined for judges aspiring to become control judges at both regional and national competitions. This will include defined criteria and expectations to ensure consistency and fairness in appointments.

GNZ will investigate opportunities to better support judging at regional events (e.g., templates for judging panels).



e. Selection to Become an International Judge

GNZ will work with Technical Committees to develop a consistent approach to judge selection for those who wish to progress judging at international level.

The process for selecting judges to become internationally qualified will be closely aligned with the standards and requirements set by World Gymnastics (WG). This alignment ensures that New Zealand judges are prepared to meet the expectations of international competition and uphold the integrity of the sport on the global stage.

To be considered to become an international judge, judges must meet a set of clearly defined criteria:

- Minimum number of years of experience as a qualified judge at the highest domestic level
- Ability to demonstrate judging experience at national-level events
- Exhibit a high level of competence, reliability, and professionalism in their judging performance

A structured and transparent selection process will be implemented to identify suitable candidates. This process will include formal applications and endorsement by relevant Technical Committees.

Judges approved to become an international judge will receive support to prepare for the WG international examinations from GNZ and Technical Committees.



f. International Judging Plans

To support the development and deployment of New Zealand judges internationally, GNZ will collaborate with Technical Committees to implement a structured international judging plan for each gymnastics code. This will provide consistency across gymnastics codes.

This will include a system for ranking and banding international judges based on international qualifications (Brevet category attained), experience, and performance. The purpose of this system is to:

- Match judges appropriately to international opportunities
- Support targeted professional development

Individual judge profiles will be maintained by each Technical Committee and approved by GNZ. These profiles will document:

- Qualifications
- Current ranking
- Judging history
- Development areas

Judges will be strategically allocated to international events based on readiness, experience, and qualification requirements for maintaining or upgrading their accreditation in future cycles.

Work on this initiative commenced in 2025.



2. Recruitment and Retention

This pillar focuses on growing and sustaining the judging workforce by improving recruitment, strengthening retention, and addressing the factors that contribute to burnout and attrition.

Improving recruitment and retention of judges is essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability and quality of gymnastics in New Zealand. A robust and well-supported judging community is critical to maintaining the integrity of competition pathways across all regions and disciplines.

To achieve this, we recognise the need for proactive strategies that attract new judges and also retain and support those already involved in the sport. These strategies must also address the growing concerns around negative experiences of judges, burnout and attrition, which can significantly impact the availability and wellbeing of judges.

The first key piece of work is to analyse judging data and insights to understand the current judging landscape and environment. This will include the number of judges in each region and code. This will help identify regions with significant gaps as well as regions with high engagement and will be used to shape key recruitment and retention initiatives.



"A robust and well-supported judging community is critical to maintaining the integrity of competition pathways."

a. Recruitment

Continually attracting new judges to the sport is crucial to support the wide range of club events, particularly as competitive codes grow and Gym for All and social competitive pathways are developed.

The initial work will be to identify exactly how many judges are required to effectively run competitions, without judges having too many back-to-back events during the competitive season.

The next step is to identify where gaps exist – both geographically and across different gymnastics codes at different levels. Once these gaps are understood, targeted recruitment strategies can be developed to try to address them.

Based on these investigations, recruitment strategies will be considered and developed as required. These may include:

- Promotional materials and aids to highlight the benefits of judging, including the opportunity to stay connected to the sport, contribute to athlete development, and be part of a supportive community.
- Recognition of prior learning will also be incorporated, allowing individuals with judging experience from other countries to transition more easily into the New Zealand system.
- Fast-tracking pathways will be explored for current and former high-level athletes, recognising their deep understanding of the sport and potential to contribute as judges.
- Additional support for those who are new to gymnastics embarking on entry-level judging.
- Development of standardised policies for those returning to judging after a period of absence.

These strategies will be investigated and developed in conjunction with Technical Committees, as required.

b. Retention

Retention is crucial to ensure that we have an adequate number of judges at all levels to deliver the wide range of events offered by clubs and GNZ.

Retention strategies will focus on creating a positive and rewarding environment for judges. It is important that judges feel valued for their contributions without getting burned out over a season.

The judging panel requirements for each code will be reviewed to ensure they align with the needs of the sport while remaining practical and achievable for clubs and GNZ when hosting competitions. These requirements will be clearly communicated in advance, along with targeted support for clubs that may face challenges in meeting them.

Other retention activities to be investigated may include:

- Recognition programmes – e.g. service awards, spotlight in newsletters and social media.
- Regular communication through newsletters, forums, and other platforms to build connections among judges and keep them informed and engaged.
- Finally, appropriate reimbursement for judging at competitions may be investigated. This would be in conjunction with any GNZ event reviews and any recommended guidance from GNZ.

3. Mentoring and Support

This pillar establishes how mentoring, feedback, and support will be provided to build judge confidence, capability, and consistency across the country.

Mentoring plays a vital role in supporting judges, helping to retain them in the sport and ensuring they have positive, rewarding experiences. It is fundamental to maintaining quality, fairness, and consistency in gymnastics judging. Through mentoring, judges can build confidence, strengthen their skills, and uphold high standards across all competitions.

GNZ will explore effective ways for mentoring and support to be provided within the judging community. Initially, the focus will be on building stronger communication channels within the judging community laying the foundation for a strong support system.



"Mentoring plays a vital role in supporting judges, helping to retain them and ensuring positive, rewarding experiences."

Monitoring and Measurable Outcomes

To ensure the Judge Development Framework delivers meaningful improvements to the judging environment in New Zealand, GNZ will monitor progress through a set of measurable outcomes. These indicators are intended to assess whether the framework is strengthening the quality, sustainability, and development of the judging community.

Progress against agreed measures will be reviewed regularly in collaboration with Technical Committees and will inform updates to the framework during each four-year Olympic cycle. The indicators outlined below are indicative and provide the basis for this work. A defined next phase will confirm benchmarks, targets, and a final set of measures, which will then be tracked consistently over time. This framework establishes the structure and intent for that monitoring, rather than locking in final measures at this stage.

GNZ will be setting key outcomes in the following areas:

1. Growth in the Judging Community
2. Judge Retention and Engagement
3. Development and Progression of Judges
4. Strength of the National Judging System
5. International Judging Representation

Key measures will be established to track progress against outcomes.

Review and Reporting

Progress against these outcomes will be monitored through data collected from:

- Judge registrations and qualification records
- Competition judging allocations
- Judge education programme participation
- Feedback from judges, Technical Committees, and event organisers

A summary of progress will be reviewed periodically by GNZ and Technical Committees to track progress and identify areas of success and opportunities for further development. These insights will inform future updates to the Judge Development Framework.

Roles and Responsibilities

The successful implementation of the Judge Development Framework relies on collaboration between GNZ, Technical Committees, clubs, regions, and the judges themselves. Each group plays an important role in supporting the development, delivery, and sustainability of the judging system in New Zealand.

The following outlines the key responsibilities of each group involved in the framework.

GNZ

GNZ is responsible for the overall governance, coordination, and strategic oversight of the Judge Development Framework.

Key responsibilities include:

- Developing and maintaining the national Judge Development Framework
- Coordinating the development and delivery of judge education programmes
- Supporting the creation and updating of educational resources and training materials
- Establishing national policies and processes relating to judging qualifications and revalidation
- Monitoring participation and progression within the judging community through national data collection
- Supporting recruitment and retention initiatives across the sport
- Working with Technical Committees to support the development of international judges.
- Ensuring the framework is reviewed and updated regularly in alignment with Olympic cycles.



Roles and Responsibilities

Technical Committees

Technical Committees play a critical role in the discipline-specific implementation of the Judge Development Framework.

Key responsibilities include:

- Providing technical expertise in the development of discipline-specific judge education and resources
- Supporting the delivery of judge education courses and workshops
- Identifying judging needs within their discipline and advising GNZ accordingly
- Supporting the selection and endorsement of judges for national and international opportunities
- Maintaining profiles of international judges and contributing to international judging plans
- Assisting with mentoring and development opportunities for judges within their discipline
- Providing feedback on the effectiveness of the judging system and recommending improvements

Clubs and Event Organisers

Clubs and event organisers play an important role in supporting the judging system at a grassroots and regional level.

Key responsibilities include:

- Encouraging members to consider judging as a way to remain involved in the sport
- Supporting the recruitment and development of new judges within their club or region
- Assisting judges to access education opportunities and gain experience at competitions
- Ensuring competitions meet recommended judging panel requirements where possible
- Creating a positive and respectful environment for judges at competitions
- Supporting communication between judges, event organisers, and GNZ

Roles and Responsibilities

Judges

Judges themselves play a key role in maintaining the integrity, professionalism, and quality of gymnastics competitions.

Key responsibilities include:

- Maintaining their judging qualifications and completing revalidation requirements when required
- Participating in ongoing education and professional development opportunities
- Judging competitions in accordance with the relevant rules and standards
- Demonstrating professionalism, fairness, and integrity in all judging activities
- Supporting the development of less experienced judges through mentoring and knowledge sharing where appropriate
- Providing feedback to GNZ and Technical Committees to help improve judging systems and education.

Collaboration Across the Judging Community

The long-term success of the Judge Development Framework relies on strong collaboration across all levels of the sport. By working together, GNZ, Technical Committees, clubs, and judges can create a supportive environment that promotes high-quality judging, encourages participation, and ensures the sustainability of the judging community.



Timelines

The Judge Development Framework will be implemented in stages over several years from July 2026. This will give GNZ time to confirm the key foundations, put core processes in place, trial support initiatives, and then refine and expand delivery before the next Olympic cycle revalidation.

The table below outlines the indicative timeline for each pillar.

Framework pillar	Related workstreams	Indicative phases and timing
Judge Pathways	Qualification pathways, revalidation and cycle planning, pathway to national events, pathway to become an international judge, international judging plans, and education delivery systems and records.	Phase 1: establish foundations and national event pathway documentation (Jul–Dec 2026). Phase 2: publish qualification pathways and revalidation guidance (Jan–Jun 2027). Refine national event pathway and develop/test international judge pathway (Jul–Dec 2027). Phase 3: embed pathways, systems, records, and international judge planning into regular operations (Jan 2028–Dec 2029+).
Recruitment and Retention	Recruitment strategy, retention and wellbeing, monitoring and evaluation, and safe/respectful delivery environment actions that support judge engagement and sustainability.	Phase 1: confirm baseline measures and data requirements (Jul–Dec 2026). Phase 2: complete workforce analysis and begin targeted recruitment actions (Jan–Jun 2027). Review recruitment activity, identify 2028 priorities, and develop retention/safe environment supports (Jul–Dec 2027). Phase 3: scale retention initiatives, refine targets, and report regularly on progress and outcomes (Jan 2028–Dec 2029+).
Mentoring and Support	Mentoring and support model, post-course support, shadow judging, online or in-person connection opportunities, mentor development.	Phase 1: confirm support requirements and implementation approach (Jul–Dec 2026). Phase 2: design and begin piloting mentoring/support initiatives (Jan–Jun 2027). Evaluate pilots and confirm the minimum national model (Jul–Dec 2027). Phase 3: embed the mentoring model nationally and continue refinement through annual review (Jan 2028–Dec 2029+).

If you have feedback or contributions to the Judge Development Framework, please email education@gymnasticsnz.com.

