

Horse Rider Assessment Policy

Purpose and Intention

The purpose and intention of this policy is to uphold animal welfare and the health and safety of riders and horses.

Riding is an optional unit and is not a compulsory element of our Equine courses. If students do not wish to ride this will not affect their qualification and they will undertake different units.

Reaseheath Equestrian Centre sources horses from a range of situations, for example, from charities, trekking centres, student or staff owned horses and privately owned horses. The college own a limited number of the horses on site. Horses generally come to the college on a livery or loan basis to give students a wide variety of high quality, industry relevant horses to train with and to ride. This pool of horses does fluctuate each academic year.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the College Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Health and Safety policy and Student Admissions Policy.

Assessment for Riding criteria

To safeguard the wellbeing of our horses, comply with health and safety requirements, ensure high levels of animal welfare and ensure a high-quality student experience we have to make an assessment of who can ride our horses safely, and this is based on a number of factors. These factors can impact on our decisions regarding which students are able to ride as part of their course.

The main factors that we have to consider are:

- **Weight a horse can carry safely**

Current research from the Saddle Research Trust and Animal Health Trust with leading equine professionals, scientists and researchers has advised that horses should only be carrying 10- 20% of their own optimum bodyweight when being ridden, this includes the clothing and tack used. If carrying over 20%, there is a substantial effect on the horse's gait, behaviour, soundness and welfare in response to rider weight.

- **Rider weight and height**

The weight and height of the rider are important in establishing whether a horse can safely carry that rider. The pool of horses that we have access to at the College does fluctuate each year, but we try to ensure that their general size, age and health are reasonably constant within an agreed tolerance, to appeal to and accommodate as many students as possible. However, this does mean that for some students who are at either end of the optimum height and weight for our horses, we may not be able to allow them to ride safely as part of their course. General guidelines for height/ weight ratios can be found below, however, this is used as a guide and are only one part of a holistic assessment of the individual for riding. An experienced and qualified member of staff will assign horses to students for riding and rider height and weight will be considered to ensure both horse welfare and the health and safety of the individual. It is also important that students have access to ride a variety of horses to be able to fulfil the assessment criteria; this is also to protect the rider and we do not wish to set any individual up to fail.

Please find some guidelines below:

Height	Min. weight (st)	Max. weight (st)	Height (cm)	Min. weight (kg)	Max. weight (kg)
Up to 4'10	6st	9st	147cm	38.1kg	57kg
4'11 – 5'2"	6st 7lb	10st	150 – 157cm	41.3kg	64kg
5'3 – 5'6"	7st 6lb	11st	160 – 168cm	47.2kg	70kg
5'7 – 5'9"	8st 5lb	12st	170 – 175cm	53kg	76kg
5'10" - 6'1"	8st 11lb	13st	178 - 185cm	55.8kg	82.5kg
6'2" - 6'4"	10st	14st	188 - 193cm	63.5kg	89kg
6'5 " upwards	10st 7lb	15st	198cm upwards	66.6kg	95.2kg

Personal health and wellbeing is also an important part of our Equine studies and is something we promote to our students, 'riders are athletes' and working in the equine industry is demanding, therefore personal fitness is important. Whilst rider height, weight and fitness are factors in our riding assessment, it is important that students do not view this as any prompt to eat or diet unhealthily.

- **Rider ability and balance**

Rider fitness, core strength and stability are important factors to consider, as well as the rider's ability; these all affect the horses' way of going, soundness and welfare. Our staff are experienced British Horse Society Accredited Professional Coaches and are fully aware of the standards required to be successful on the riding units. The College have a finite amount of time to be able to progress students and support their achievement and therefore it is important that students have a level of skill to build on. Whilst we have a range of horses, these are not typical 'riding school' type horses and students are paired carefully with horses to support individual progression and safety. It is important that students are able to ride a variety of horses in order to fulfil the assessment criteria and we would not want to disadvantage any individual, or set them up to fail, if we believed that this was not achievable.

- **Level and duration of work**

The pool of horses that we work with at the College are sourced from a range of situations and are often owned by external parties and individuals, not the College. We must ensure that these horses are well cared for and that their health and wellbeing is not compromised whilst they are with us. This means carefully assessing the optimum level and duration of work that they can do considering each horse as an individual.

- **Range and Frequency of use**

The management of the frequency of use is extremely important to ensure animal welfare and that the condition of our horses does not deteriorate. The range of horses that students can ride is important as our course assessment criteria for riding involves a requirement for students to be able to ride a variety of our college horses. We therefore need to ensure that this is achievable

for our students and that we give them the best opportunity to demonstrate their riding skills during the assessment process. We attempt to ensure that our pool of horses does vary but often this is outside of our control and is one of the factors which influences which students are able to ride. Although it is not necessary for students to own or loan a horse outside of College, for those who do, it is important to be aware that they cannot be utilised for riding assessments. Students are able to borrow other students' privately owned horses that are on the yard with their permission and after a professional discussion with staff; a signed disclaimer from both parties and relevant insurances must be in place. Work hours for the horse will still be a factor to consideration in this scenario in order to maintain horse welfare. These horses may be used for assessments in these circumstances, if discussed and agreed with a member of staff, however, the individual must still ride a variety of horses to fulfil the assessment criteria. A variety of College horses must be ridden to ensure assessments are fair for all.

- **Availability of horses**

Our pool of horses fluctuates each year and whilst we try to ensure the general size, age and health of the horses within our pool remains reasonably constant to appeal to as many students as possible, this is not always the case.

All of the above factors have to be taken into account when evaluating whether a student can ride the horses at Reaseheath as part of their course; and these factors are nationally recognised by leading industry experts as good practice in determining safe riding. Our Equine specialists are knowledgeable and skilled in making this assessment and are able to advise students accordingly. Often the decision that a student is unable to ride are based on factors outside the student's immediate control and have to be made due to health and safety or animal welfare reasons and it is important to manage student expectations in respect of this. Riding is not an essential element of our courses; many careers within the Equine Industry are more focused on management or are in allied sectors of the industry which do not require riding as a core element of the role. We do encourage students to ride outside of the course where they wish to and will help to support this where we can.

The Equine industry is amazingly varied in the range of roles and occupations that students can enter and only a small proportion of industry roles involve competitive riding. Our courses give students access to the skills and experience that they need to step into any one of these exciting careers and become successful.

As part of the college PRIDE values, we are committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and therefore recognise that there may be circumstances where reasonable adjustments may be required to support a student. In these cases, please discuss this with a member of the team and this will be considered on an individual basis. Any reasonable adjustments made will be reviewed regularly and formally on an annual basis if a student stays at the college for more than one academic year. As our pool of horses change from year to year we need to ensure that the adjustments in place are safe and reasonable.

Ride standard setting process

All students who would like to ride at college (progressive or assessed) will be initially assessed via a questionnaire which is required to be returned prior to the assessment. This questionnaire will be assessed by our Equine specialists, taking into account factors outlined in our rider assessment criteria. Students will be notified if there is an obvious criterion which may prevent them from riding. Feedback will be given, and a full discussion held with the student to explain the decision taken.

Those students who are deemed suitable after the initial paper assessment, will need to attend a Ride Standard Setting Session to explore the rider assessment criteria in more detail.

Prior to the Ride Standard Setting Session, the student will receive information regarding riding at college which they will have the opportunity to read through. Upon arrival for the session, they will be given a tour of the department and facilities. Individual heights and weights will be taken privately. This data will not be shared with members of staff undertaking other elements of assessment during the session; but will form part of the overall rider assessment. A hat check will be carried out to ensure they meet the required standards, as previously advised.

The ride standard setting session will be a holistic assessment and will involve a basic fitness test and an individual assessment on the mechanical horse with a BHS qualified instructor. It is expected that an individual is able to ride in a balanced position, independent of the reins and stirrups. If a student does not demonstrate the required skills of this element, they will be provided with guidance and an action plan to help improve their riding further. The College would recommend the use of BHS Accredited Professional Coaches (APC) for any training outside of College; a list of these in each area can be found on the BHS website. If a student would like to be reassessed within the first half term, they need to highlight this to a member of staff when they start the programme, with their action plan which has been signed by their instructor (BHS APC) to evidence improvements and a re-assessment opportunity will be arranged.

If the student demonstrates the skills required on the mechanical horse, they will progress to an assessment on a live horse. The student will receive feedback from an instructor on the day, which will also give them the opportunity to discuss their feedback and ask any questions; we encourage parents/guardians to be available for the feedback. Parents/ guardians/ external parties are not permitted to view the live horse assessment, as it will take place in a small group.

<i>Rider Assessment Policy & Equality Impact Assessment</i>	<i>Reviewed: December 2020 Published: May 2021</i>
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