

S C O T T I S H *swimming*  
everyone can swim!

**National Squad Programme**

**Selection Policy & Times Rationale**

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 have been structured so that the appropriate physical development will be encouraged at the appropriate time.

## 6.1 Selection Criteria Philosophy

The selection criteria have been designed in order to support the achievement of our key performance targets, ultimately delivering the key targets identified.

For this reason, an analysis of the data in the British swimming all-time ranking lists was carried out. Performances were tracked for all ages (from 11 to 18, plus Open age) across all competition events (long course).

Performances ranked tenth [10<sup>th</sup>] and one hundredth [100<sup>th</sup>] in the all-time lists were used as the guidelines. Tenth was used as a guide to very high level achievement within each age but without being affected by any 'freak' or 'extraordinary' talented performers or performances that may sit within the top few rankings. One hundredth place was used as a good measure of high level depth within each age group.

This data was then examined to determine the relative standards of Scottish swimmers, at what level Scotland should pitch its various squads, and the rate of progression of swimmers between age groups.

The data used is based on literally millions of swims from all ages of swimmers across all events over an extended period of time (year range 1995 – 2005) and therefore the data provides accurate information of the standards of British swimmers, and consequently the relative strengths and weaknesses of Scottish swimmers within that framework.

The policy allows swimmers to achieve at three different levels (Gold-Silver-Bronze), and to achieve across varying numbers of events at each age and level to be selected. The policy promotes an inclusive approach to swimmer development.

The following targets were used:

Level	Target Numbers	Squad
Gold: 17-20+ yrs	*20	Senior / **Institute Network
Gold: 14-16 yrs	*20	Youth / **Institute Network
Silver: 17-20+ yrs	*20	Youth / **Institute Network
Silver: 13-16 yrs Bronze: 17-20 yrs	*80	Youth Development
Bronze: 11-16 yrs	*600-800	District Regional

\* The numbers identified are guidelines and not absolutes. If, however, the number of swimmers achieving selection standards is not sustainable, Scottish Swimming reserves the right to limit numbers.

\*\*Subject to discussion and agreement with the SIS.

## Level and Ages

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

Level	Age
Gold	14yrs+
Silver	13yrs+
Bronze	11yrs+

### Number of Times Required

It is widely recognised in long term athlete development planning that successful senior swimmers undergo a good background of multi-event aerobic training in their formative years. In order to promote 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.

Age	Gold	Silver	Bronze
20	1	1	1/2*
19	1	1	1/2*
18	1	2	2/3*
17	1	2	2/3*
16	2 (Max 1 x 50m event)	2 (Max 1 x 50m event)	3 (Max 1 x 50m event)
For 11-15 years selection events must include 1 swim from 2 of the following 3 categories: Freestyle, Form, I.M.			
15	3 (min 2 @ 200+)	3 (min 2 @ 200+)	3 (min 2 @ 200+)
14	4 (min 3 @ 200+ including 1 @ 400+)	4 (min 3 @ 200+ including 1 @ 400+)	4 (min 3 @ 200+ including 1 @ 400+)
13	N/A	4 @ 200+ (min 1 @ 400+)	4 @ 200+ (min 1 @ 400+)
12	N/A	N/A	3 @ 200+ (min 1 @ 400+)
11	N/A	N/A	3 @ 200+

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

400+ = all 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.

\* 17+ Bronze – two or 1 time required if using Olympic events only, three or two times required if using non Olympic events.

Should the number of swimmers achieving the selection standard exceed the number of places available, numbers may be restricted.

Age as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009

### Other Considerations

It is important that all swimmers receive the support that they require and therefore in the case of exceptional circumstances – e.g. top level performances, injury, illness – the Performance Director, on discussion and agreement with the National Coach, can place a swimmer within the appropriate level of the National Programme. When acting in these situations, the following aspects will be reviewed;

- Number of qualifying times
- Current support
- Length of support
- Percentage away from times (present and future)
- Age and current training situation

The use of a restricted contract may also be implemented where required. The full view of the swimmers' coach will be sought by the National Coach or Performance Director before any decision is finalised. All selected swimmers will be required to sign the Scottish Swimming swimmer code of conduct.

Please note that selections to the sportscotland Institute of Sport are subject to discussion and agreement with sportscotland Institute of Sport staff.

## Selection Competitions

In order to be successful at International level, swimmers must be able to achieve their best performance in a single swim on a given day. This is promoted by identifying precise selection opportunities the further up the programme swimmers progress. The philosophy of the 'Bronze' level, however, is to be as inclusive as possible (11 – 16yrs) and therefore no restriction on meets is put in place for this level.

Age	Meets where you can achieve criteria
11-16 Bronze	Any <i>accredited</i> meet (Short Course or Long Course) Selection Period: 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2008 – 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2009
13-16 Silver 17-20 Bronze	District Championships, Scottish Short Course Championships plus any other accredited Long Course Meet. Additional accredited (or equivalent) Short Course meets may be used with the prior agreement of the Director of Performance. Selection Period: 1 <sup>st</sup> January – 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2009
14-20 Gold 17-20 Silver	Scottish & British National Championships, International events, other meets agreed in advance with Director of Performance. (Long Course ONLY) Selection Period: 1 <sup>st</sup> January – 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2009

## The Times

In order to meet the Scottish Swimming performance targets, the current World top 15 time was examined for years 2005 to 2008 and an average determined. The average age of swimmers ranked in this world top 15 was also calculated in order to provide a guide to how long it should take to develop a swimmer to that level.

Scottish Swimming has applied an upper age band of qualifying for national squad programmes at '20 years and over'. One of the primary objectives of the programme is, therefore, to have swimmers reach the top 15 in the world standard at some point when aged 20 or older.

It was therefore important to set the fastest time in the squad structure (20+ Gold time) slightly below, but still within striking distance of the world top 15 standard. It is reasonable to expect senior athletes to be aiming to achieve 1% improvement in performance in a season and therefore 1% below the top 15 time was used as the baseline for the 20+ Gold standard.

The average age of swimmers attaining the top 15 standard was also analysed and factored into the equation for determining the actual 20+ Gold time.

In events where the average age of the world top 15 was 20 years or below, the 20+ Gold time has been set at 1% lower than the world top 15 time. This ensures that Scottish swimmers who are coming close to world elite level in their 20's are picked up by the highest level of the programme in order to help them make the next step up to top 15 achievement.

In events where the average age of the world top 15 was 21 or older, an additional 0.25% has been added for every year that the average age is above 20. For example, if the average age is 22 the 20+ Gold time required is 1.5% below the world top 15 level ( $1 + 0.25 + 0.25 = 1.5\%$ ).

This ensures that the programme recognises that it takes longer to reach the top in some events, as opposed to others, by factoring in the uppermost standard being set further away from the world top 15 time.

For interest, the oldest average age was obtained in the men's 100 freestyle at 25.13 years and the youngest was the women's 400 IM at 18.67 years. Thus, in general terms, coaches and swimmers who want to reach the world top 15 need take into account that (on average) it may take 6.5 years longer to do so in the men's 100 freestyle than the women's 400 IM.

By taking this into account in the uppermost times and maintaining the principle throughout all the times for all levels, Scottish Swimming ensures that the programme is reflective of actual progression and standards for every event at world level.

## **Rates of Progression Between Ages**

Using the data collected from the All-Time British Swimming Ranking Lists, the actual rates of progression of swimmers between all age groups for all events were calculated.

As anticipated these showed that progression is quicker during the younger the ages, slowing down as swimmers get older. They also showed that the rate of progression for females is lower than that for males (for all age groups). In fact, in some female events at older age groups, the standards actually regressed slightly between years. It was hypothesised that this is due to less total swimmers taking part the older the age, and thus less depth is illustrated in the historical standards.

It would not be useful to reflect these rates of progressions exactly, particularly as the aim is to keep swimmers advancing at a faster rate than the British average. The identified progression rates were used as a guideline for this programme. However, the rates were amended to maintain progression between all age groups, with the rates gradually reduced in the older the age band, and male rates progressing faster than those for females.

### **Differences Between Gold, Silver & Bronze Standards**

Determining the differences between the times at each of the three identified levels (Gold, Silver, Bronze) is a matter of taking into account the target numbers set.

#### **Gold to Silver**

After considering the current standards of swimmers in Scotland it was determined that for the most part, the Silver standard should be set 3% slower than the Gold time. However, in order to promote the development of aerobic training for the 200 metre and longer events, at the younger age groups the standard has been set slightly lower than 3%.

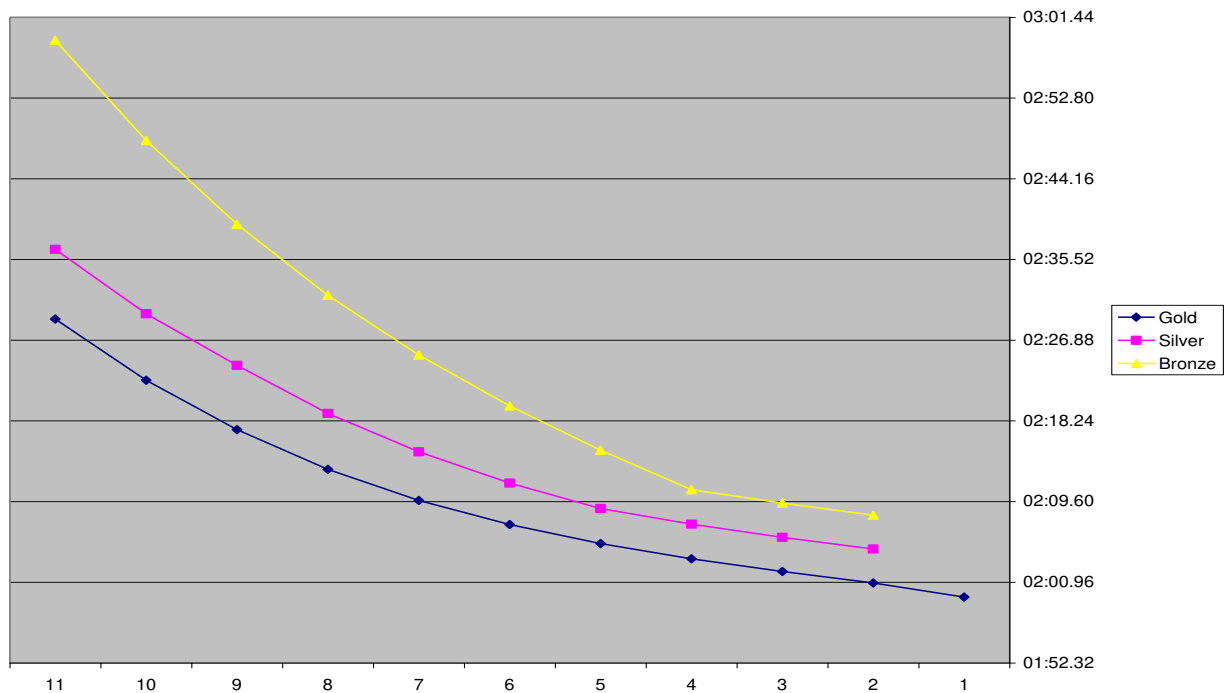
#### **Gold to Bronze**

It is essential that there are high levels of numbers achieving the (11-16 years) Bronze standards (600-800 total). This equates to approximately 50-60 boys and 50-60 girls from

each single year age band. In order to achieve the target number, various factors were included:

- The events required for achievement (largely 200's and longer events);
- The numbers of swimmers currently swimming those events; and
- Availability to swim those events at meets across the country.

The resulting initial Bronze times are a long way outside the Gold standard. On first appearance to coaches and swimmers, the times may appear quite easy. However, as the age increases, the difference between Gold and Bronze is gradually reduced until it reaches 6% at the older ages. An example of this can be seen in the graph below:



The graph shows the progression rates for the female 200m freestyle where the points on the x axis represent the various age bands (11 = 11 years, 2 = 20+ years, 1 = World Top 15 time).

#### Key Notes:

The Selection policy is published annually containing any relevant adjustments and explanation (all available on the Scottish Swimming website – [www.scottishswimming.com](http://www.scottishswimming.com))

- Times for selection from 2006 – 2008 remained unaltered.
- Times for the next 4 year period (2009 – 2012) have been regenerated taking in to account the worldwide improvement in the sport (2005 – 2008). Whilst reviewed at the end of each season it is unlikely that these times will be altered.
- There will be further selections, based on performance for swimmers within the National Programme, to participate in overseas competition to widen and develop the competitive experience.
- Squads will, where possible, be announced by the end of August each year.
- All selection nominations agreed by the Director of Performance and the National Coach will be confirmed by the Swimming High Performance Group.

## **National Squad Selection Policy and Times – Review and Changes**

Following the completion of the latest Olympic cycle, a review of the National Selection Policy and Times took place, focussing on a number of different areas;

### ***Times***

- World top 15 times
- Average age for achieving world top 15 times
- World Class
- Progression between squads

### ***Policy***

- Events required at specific age groups

### **World Top 15 Times**

The world of swimming has moved forward considerably over the past 12 months in all events both in the performances of the leading swimmers and the depth of performances within the worlds top 15. With over 100 world records being set, many put the progression down to the advances in suit technologies where improvements of 1 – 2% can be made.. It is important that these improvements are taken in to account when reviewing the selection times for the Scottish Swimming squad selections. As a result, the world top 15 times used for 2009/10 have been taken as an average top 15 placing from 2005 – 2008 in the World Rankings (2 per nation). The Scottish Swimming target continues to be 8 swimmers in World Top 15 (2 per nation) at the time of the Olympic Trials, thus a standard equivalent to this continues to be the cornerstone of the selection times produced. Across every event, times have improved with no events regressing. Further detail on the philosophy used to generate the times can be found that the full Selections Document covering Rationale & Selection Times (2006) on the Scottish Swimming Web Site:

[www.scottishswimming.com](http://www.scottishswimming.com)

### **Average Age**

As per the above, the average age of swimmers from 2005 – 2008 was re-calculated. Changes have been minimal with some events changing by around 6 months. This has affected the differentials used to calculate progressions in a small number of events.

### **World Class**

Due to the continued progress of swimmers at British Senior, Youth and Junior levels the standard required to achieve on the British Stage going forwards continues to improve. The recent publication of World Class Development times clearly challenges swimmers and coaches to achieve at performances levels and swimming in Scotland must also respond to this challenge. Thus, the production of the new Scottish Swimming Selection times takes in to account expectancy placed at this level.



## **Progression Between Squads**

The number of swimmers achieving at Gold Silver and Bronze levels was examined. Numbers at Bronze and Silver levels 11 – 16yrs continue to grow, with numbers at 17+ Senior Gold and Silver above 2012 targets. Numbers of swimmers at Youth Gold remain steady, whilst 2009 saw a significant increase of swimmers at the Senior Bronze level.

<b>Squad</b>	<b>2006 - 07</b>	<b>2007 - 08</b>	<b>2008 - 09</b>
Bronze (11- 16)	409	468	521
Bronze (17+)	8	11	23
Silver (13 – 16)	78	80	84
Gold (14 – 16)	23	17	15
Senior Silver( 17+)	19	18	25
Senior Gold (17+)	23	23	29

On examination of the Senior Gold group, it is clear that the age profile of the group favours those swimmers at the ages of 17/18yrs. In addition, examination of the squad selections from the past 3 years would suggest that swimmers are making the senior gold level at the age of 17 but are finding it difficult to retain their position within the squad. In addition, swimmers supported on the Youth Squad and Area Institute can maintain this level of support whilst regressing in performance (youth squad – senior silver) between the age of 16 and 17yrs.

## **Changes to Times**

Taking in to account the above, the following changes have been made to the National Squads Selection Times;

- Times tightened per event based on the improvement to the World Top 15 average (and therefore across each strand).
- 17 year old times at Gold level made more challenging for both boys and girls, taking in to account the slower progression of girls at this stage. In doing so only stand out talent will progress on to the Senior Gold level and as a result provide a greater chance of swimmers staying on track.
- As the normal pathway of Area Institute support moves from 16yrs Gold to 17 yrs Silver, times have been altered to ensure performance progression, thus swimmers will not be allowed to regress in performance and remain supported at this stage of development.
- Similarly, the Senior Bronze times have been significantly tightened and the normal rate of progression aligned with Silver times 16/under, i.e. a swimmer who is making a standard rate of progression would likely move from YDS at age 16 to Senior Bronze at age 17, whereas, a swimmer improving ahead of the 'norm' may go from YDS at 16 to Senior Silver at 17 and thereby start receiving Area Institute support.
- Whilst the DRP target (bronze 11- 16) remains at 800, the times at this level have been tightened in acknowledgement that the sport has moved on significantly over the past couple of years. This tightening up brings the bronze times closer to that of the Youth Development and challenges coaches and swimmers to improve the performances of their swimmers at this level.

## **Changes to Selection Policy**

Through feedback from coaches, observation of selections of swimmers in to squads, entries in to National meets, tightening of Scottish Age Group consideration times, it is fair to say that the philosophy behind the National Squads Selection policy has clearly been successful in changing the training philosophies of many coaches and swimmers. Many more opportunities to swim the identified distances and events are now being provided and as a result no changes to the selection policy have been made between the ages of 11 and 16yrs. It is felt however, that there is an opportunity to develop the Senior Bronze policy by altering the number of events needed to gain selection. In recognition that senior swimmers are likely to be focussing on more specific events at this age of development a reduction in the number of events is required. In order to reduce the chances of senior bronze swimmers focussing on the non Olympic events in order to gain access to the squad structure, changes for Olympic events only have been made.

Taking in to account the above, the following changes have been made to the National Squads Selection Policy;

- Senior Bronze 17/18 yrs – 2 times required (Olympic Events) or 3 times required (including non Olympic events)
- Senior Bronze 19/20yrs – 1 time required (Olympic Event) or 2 times required (including non Olympic events)