



Academy Handbook



Foreword

Hi everyone

I loved being a member of the Yorkshire Academy and at the time getting together with the squad was something I looked forward to massively. There was lots I enjoyed but, in particular, I liked the challenge it brought, building friendships and just training with other like-minded athletes.

Being an Academy member really was a great first step in my triathlon journey and I hope it is for you too!

Best wishes and good luck.

Jonny Brownlee

Olympic and World Champion



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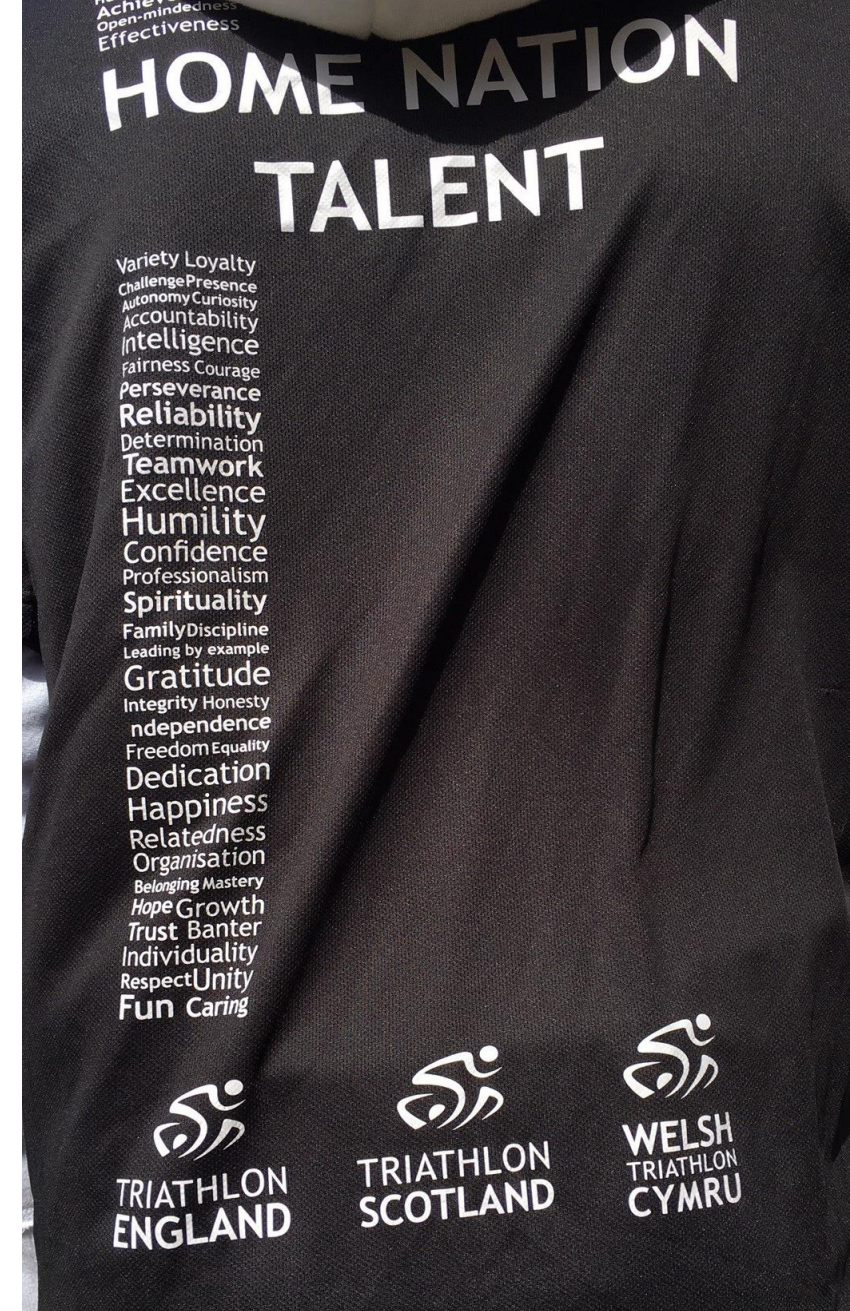
Section 1 About Academies



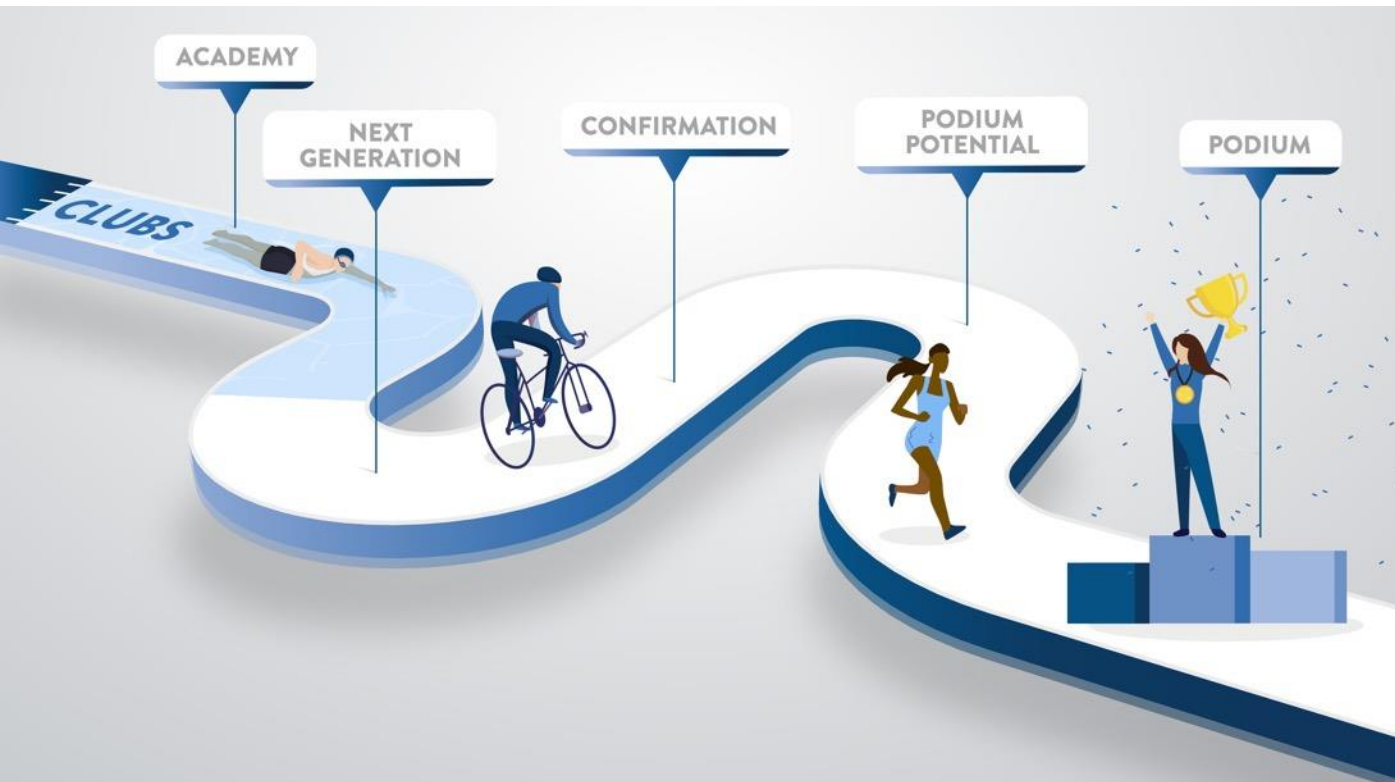
Working Together

British Triathlon has a strong history of developing successful young athletes who step through the Pathway to senior success. While each Home Nation is funded separately through the Academy and Next Generation stages of the Pathway we all work very closely and share the same development philosophies. We also work together to deliver all competition, selection policies and other guidance e.g., anti-doping, mental health, safeguarding and welfare. Sections one and three of this handbook as well as a lot of information on our website reflect this and are written collaboratively.

Along with separate funding, variation in geography and population size between each Home Nation mean that there are also some differences in how we operate and select at Academy and Next Generation. These differences are explained by each Home Nation separately in section two.



The Pathway



1. Academy is our first step and is about exposing athletes to performance triathlon. There are 12 Academies across Britain: 1 in Scotland, 1 in Wales and 10 in England.
2. Next Generation squads contain the best developing triathletes of each Home Nation. At this stage athletes are exploring the basics of triathlon performance.
3. Confirmation is the first step into the UK Sport funded World Class Programme. Athletes are looking to confirm their potential for the highest levels of the sport by exploring and enhancing the necessary skills, abilities and behaviours.
4. Podium Potential is the final developmental stage of the Pathway where athletes enhance and begin to excel in high performance triathlon.
5. Podium itself is where our very best athletes reside – athletes who excel at world level through medal delivery at the Olympic Games.



The Athlete Development Framework

The ADF is our sport leading development framework designed around a set of principles that align with our core values on talent development and coaching practice. Importantly it focuses on developing more than just swim, bike and run. We want to create independent learners and problem solvers, athletes capable of consistently making the right decisions at the right time no matter the level of expectation. The ADF is split into 6 pillars each of which has a key role to play in the development journey. For more on the ADF and its pillars please see [here](#).

In the same way it takes a number of years to acquire the physical standards needed for Olympic triathlon success, it will take a similar amount of time to develop the key pillars. As such, the framework is introduced at Academy, the first selective step on our Pathway, and remains a constant focus of development throughout the Pathway journey to the Podium programme.

The pillars are not by any means designed to replace triathlon training – they are triathlon training. Triathlon is a physical sport and there is no shortcut past innumerate hours of physical work; we are simply broadening our focus of development to incorporate the whole triathlete and person. In so doing we are equipping our young athletes to not only be better people but also excel in the highly competitive world of elite triathlon.

Purpose and Aims

The ultimate goal of the performance pathway is to develop athletes who have the skills and abilities to achieve at the very highest levels of the sport. This is obviously a long journey and at Academy, the first (selected) stage of the pathway, we aim to expose athletes to performance triathlon through;

- Positive and engaging triathlon experiences that add value to build a love of training and the sport (Training as Play)
- Exposure to the basic skills, knowledge and performance behaviours and standards required to succeed in performance triathlon
- Engaging and educating parents

The Academy is not designed to replace the home training environment. The goal is to create a positive, challenging and inspiring environment to help aid and guide Whole Athlete Development in line with the 6 Pillars of the British Triathlon (BTF) **Athlete Development Framework** (ADF). This is achieved through experiences that add value to that which the athlete can access in their home training environment.



Who is the Academy aimed at?

Academies cater for Youth and Junior athletes with a primary focus on the Youth age groups. Youth A's are aged 15-16, Youth B 17 and Juniors 18-19 in the year of competition (January to December).

The Academy Lead

The Academy Lead is the direct link and bridge between the Academy and the Next Generation programme. The role of the Academy Leads, as with all staff working within the various Home Nations programmes, is to support and develop athletes who may have the long term potential to step up the Performance Pathway and achieve at the highest levels of the sport. As well as leading all aspects of Academy delivery Lead Coaches provide invaluable guidance, support and signposting to athletes, parents and coaches in all aspects of performance triathlon.





Academy Objectives

In line with the **ADF** all Academies are working towards Whole Athlete Development. This is defined as developing well-rounded young people who not only have the physical capacities for the sport but also have the problem solving and independent learning skills to make the right decisions to support both their athletic and personal development and progression in sport and life.

In working towards achieving Whole Athlete Development all Academies will;

- Identify, support and develop athletes with potential through the creation of positive and challenging environments that expose athletes to performance triathlon
- Provide guidance, signposting and training advice to Academy athletes
- Support athletes in competition environments e.g., at British Super Series events or similar
- Engage, collaborate and enable coaches, parents and clubs currently working with young athletes
- Provide support and advice for athletes looking to access Home Nation Next Generation Programmes

Academy benefits

Athletes invited to join the Academy will benefit from;

- Academy training days and camps throughout the year to develop experience and awareness¹
- First class coaching and guidance on camps in such areas as Open Water Swimming, Group Riding, Equipment Selection, Race Planning, Nutrition, Performance Lifestyle, Strength and Conditioning and Mental Preparation
- Remote support and advice between Academy meetings²
- Support at British Super Series Events
- Academy kit¹

¹The cost of any Academy Training camp, associated activities or Academy kit may be subsidised through Academy budgets, however, it is likely you will be required to make a full or partial financial contribution for most activities. Any athletes or parents concerned about costs should speak to their Academy Lead

²The amount and quality of remote support will depend on the athletes needs as well as their performance level



Academy commitments

We know the value that Academy membership brings as over 70% of our current World Class Programme athletes began their performance triathlon journey in an Academy. In simple terms the more an athlete puts in the more they'll get out, the greater their level of engagement the greater their experience and associated development will be.

We understand that athletes who train and compete in three sports have busy schedules and we also want to encourage athletes to take small levels of ownership and responsibility (Learning to Lead) as they develop through the Academy. A great example of this is an athlete having a timely conversation with their Academy lead about a potential clash and the options that surround it.

For many athletes being an Academy member means they naturally start to prioritise Triathlon, this is great and our primary focus during the race season is the British Super Series, details of which can be found [here](#). We would though still encourage athletes to retain a broad a competitive focus across the three single disciplines through the Academy years. Academy Leads can offer excellent advice on balancing a competition programme.

Super Series starts are decided at the Performance Assessment weekend normally taking place in late March/early April. All Academy athletes, and any other British athletes who'd like to compete in the Super Series will be expected to attend.



The IRC

The Inter-Regional Championship takes place annually as part of the season ending British Triathlon Grand Final and is a competition which brings together teams from each English region along with Wales, Scotland and Jersey. More information on the IRC can be found [here](#)

Whilst Academy athletes will race at the Grand Final in the Youth and Junior races the IRC team is not directly related to the Academy. However, many IRC athletes aspire to become Academy athletes. Good performance in the IRC race should not be taken as an indication that you will achieve the standard required for Academy selection. Academy selection is **NOT** based upon performance at the IRC, instead swimming and running times, along with broader physical abilities, skills and behaviours make up each Home Nations selection process.





Section 2

Academy operations and selections



English Academies

Operations and selection



Academy Location & Operation

English Academies are split into 10 regions, these being – North East, North West, Yorkshire, East, East Midlands, West Midlands, South East, London, South Central and South West. Athletes are obviously expected to attend the Academy in the region where they live.

Each region has their own unique differences, particularly in terms of geography and available facilities, so activities and their location naturally vary across Academies and Academy Leads are given the freedom to operate the delivery model they believe best suits their region. Some Academies will choose in the main to operate from a fixed location as they believe that affords them the best set of facilities to create an optimal environment while others will vary locations according to the chosen activity.

Another key difference is that some regions chose to operate Development Squads for older Tristar athletes and less experienced youths. While other regions operate an Academy and Affiliate programme, Affiliates being Academy age athletes who are invited to some, but not all, sessions, while Academy members are able to attend all sessions. There is also the flexibility, should the Regional Lead choose, to invite athletes who are on an Academy trajectory to certain sessions as guests in order to support their transition into the Academy for the following year.





Activity Plan

While there are some differences in Academy delivery from English region to region there are also some very clear commonalities too;

- Academies aim to have some form of contact and/or activity on a monthly basis
- Academy years run October to September
- All Academies have their trials at the end of the season (normally September)
- During the winter activities have a more overt training focus. In Spring that focus turns to race prep and during the summer it's on racing and the British Super Series
- Academies will direct athletes to certain 'add value' sessions in their locality which may happen on a more frequent basis than official Academy activity e.g. Open water swims, bike sessions, etc. that may or may not be run by the Academy Lead
- Different Academies are encouraged to come together through the year at points, examples may include a camp with a specific focus or an Intelligent Race Day (IRD) where greater athlete numbers contribute to a more positive and challenging athlete experience

Academy Selection

Taking place annually in September/October - this is a three-stage process across all Academies and all athletes, whether new or returning, are required to apply each year. For younger athletes results in their local Junior Series or any other Triathlons and/or single discipline races are no guarantee of entry to the Academy.

Stage 1: Application

Applications (found [here](#)) are open to all athletes who will be aged between 15 and 19* in the following competitive season i.e. will be a Youth A, Youth B or Junior. Athlete age for Academy Trials is taken as **age on 1st September**. Applications will require athletes to evidence swimming and running standards over the following distances more info on where to apply:

- Ages 14 -15: 200m swim/1500m run
 - Ages 16-19: 400m swim/3000m run
- Performances will need to be verified e.g., appear on the [British Swimming](#) or [UK Athletics](#) databases.*

British Triathlon uses a swim/run points table to indicate an athlete's age and stage potential at this level of the Pathway. Levels will vary across England according to numbers and current standards in each Academy, but a general minimum standard for invitation to the trials would be around 300 points. The points table can be found [here](#). Scores are calculated from the combined total of the corresponding points awarded for personal best times in each discipline.

Athletes will also be expected to have a basic understanding of the [ADF](#) and will be asked to assess their weakest and strongest pillars as part of their application.

Swimming, running and the requisite performance behaviours play a big part in Academy selections and are the priority at this stage of the Pathway. However, most Academies will assess cycling ability at Stage 3. Athletes who do not have any cycling or triathlon experience are very much encouraged to apply and if selected into an Academy will be expected to have a real focus on developing their riding.

athletes applying aged 18 and 19 (for the following competition season) will need to demonstrate they are **on a rapidly improving trajectory and/or are **new to the sport**.*





Stage 2: Academy Trials

Time Trials are held over the relevant age-appropriate distances (age as of 1st September)

- Ages 14-15: 200m swim/1500m run
- Ages 16-18: 400m swim/3000m run

Time Trials, in line with the ADF, are a One Day One Race opportunity with athletes being given the opportunity to prepare and deliver their best performance on that given day. The day will give the Academy coaching team the chance to observe athletes in delivering their race processes. The Academy Lead will also give a short talk/presentation outlining the expectations, culture within and operational model of the Academy while also giving athletes and parents the chance to ask questions they might have. Athletes successful in Stage 2 will be invited back to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Academy Selection Days

Stage 3 is a more detailed look at the athletes' abilities and behaviours across several elements relevant to the ADF as well as their physical and technical capabilities. Behaviours include but are not limited to; commitment, passion, engagement, hard work, fascination, can do attitude, a willingness to accept and enjoy challenge & adversity and making a positive contribution to the environment. The length of stage 3 varies from Academy to Academy and can be anything from one day to six months. Assessment is continuous whatever the length of this period, this gives the Academy Lead a broader and deeper understanding of each athlete allowing more objective selection decisions to be made.



Scotland Academy

Operations and selection



Academy Location and Operation

Scotland has one academy, which is split into two - Academy and Academy Affiliate; with Academy athletes fully meeting the expected standards and Academy Affiliates not quite there yet, but committed to working towards achieving the standards the next 6-24 months. Athletes are expected to attend the Academy in the area where they live so Scottish athletes who live in England, for example, are expected to join the Academy nearest to them.

The Scottish Academy makes use of the fantastic Scottish environment, so activities and their location will be selected to create an optimal environment and provide a wide range of learning opportunities and experiences, that are not available in the athlete's home environment. There will also be some activities based out of National Triathlon Centre to allow athletes to experience this environment.

Swimming, running and the requisite performance behaviours play a big part in Academy selections and are the priority at this stage of the Pathway. However, the Scottish Academy will not assess cycling for Academy Affiliates. Athletes who do not have any cycling or triathlon experience are very much encouraged to apply and if they meet the swim / run standards will be invited onto the Academy as an Affiliate and are then expected to have a real focus on developing their riding and transition skills.





Academy Affiliate Squad

Who is it for?

- Score a minimum of 310 points in Swim / Run on the British Triathlon points table to be considered
- Aim to be *strong* in 1 or 2 out of the three disciplines of swim / bike / run and could be new to another, opportunity to be supported in developing the discipline you are not as strong in.
- Athletes can normally be part of Academy Affiliate squad for up to 2 years depending on their development and progress

What you get?

- Opportunity to attend academy camps, single days & weekends winter October-April (Note if spaces limited priority will be given to Academy Squad)
- Opportunity to attend selected Intelligent Race Days April-September supporting race skills
- Online group education & training sessions
- Signposting to activities to support your development

What is expected?

- Attend at least two Affiliate days per year
- Work on development points around areas to move towards full Academy squad
- Start to keep a training diary and reflect on own training
- Commit to racing a minimum of one British Super Series event

Academy Squad

Who is it for?

- Score a minimum of 340 points in Swim / Run on the British Triathlon points table to be considered
- Athletes who have experience in all 3 disciplines of swim, bike and run
- Athletes can come straight into the Academy or move up from the Affiliate Squad

What do you get?

- Training camps, single days & weekends through winter September - April
- Intelligent Race Days April-August supporting race skills
- Online group training and education sessions
- Monthly contact from the Academy Lead Coach or agreed Academy Support Coach

What is expected:

- Attend agreed training camps, intelligent race days and British Super Series events.
- Maintain training diary reflecting your weekly training
- Engage in planning and review calls with lead coach
- Commit to racing a minimum of 3 British Super Series events





Academy Trial Access Sessions

These are designed for athletes who have a strong swim and / or run profile but limited triathlon experience and who would like to find out more about the Academy prior to applying. These are run during the summer. We would recommend new applicants attend one of these

Application Process

Applications are open to all athletes who will be aged between 15 and 19* in the following competitive season i.e., will be a Youth A, Youth B or Junior. Athlete age for Academy Trials is taken as **age on 31st December**. Applications will require athletes to evidence swimming and running standards over the following distances:

- Ages 13-15: 200m swim/1500m run
- Ages 16-19: 400m swim/3000m run

Athletes can either submit verified times or attend an Academy Trials Day where they will have the opportunity to complete a Swim and Run Time Trial. If athletes have a verified time, they do not need to attend the trials day, but they may want to do so in order to better their time. The Trials Day will also be an opportunity to ask questions and find out more about the Academy. Normally athletes would be expected to score 290+ points to be invited to trials.

Performances will need to be verified e.g., appear on the **British Swimming or **UK Athletics** databases, or by a Triathlon Scotland Coach.*

*Applications are considered from athletes new to the Academy aged 18 and 19 assuming such athletes are **on a rapidly improving trajectory** and/or **new to the sport**.*

Selection Process

Athletes will also be expected to have a basic understanding of the Athlete Development Framework and will be asked to assess their weakest and strongest pillars as part of their application. Information on the Athlete Development Framework can be found [here](#).

Following the Academy Trials athletes will be invited to a selection day which will involve

- Bike handling skills
- A 1:1 meeting with an Academy Coach for all returning athletes and for all new athletes scoring 340+ points
- Group sessions with an Academy Coach for all new athletes scoring 310+ points

This is a more detailed look at the athletes' abilities and behaviours across several elements relevant to the **Athlete Development Framework** as well as their physical and technical capabilities. Behaviours include but are not limited to; commitment, passion, engagement, hard work, fascination, can do attitude, a willingness to accept and enjoy challenge & adversity and making a positive contribution to the environment.

Selections will be announced following this day, and all athletes will be given feedback and signposting to the next stage of their triathlon journey. There will be opportunities for athletes to move from Academy Affiliate to Academy Squad throughout the year if they achieve the standards required.





Welsh Academy

Operations and selection



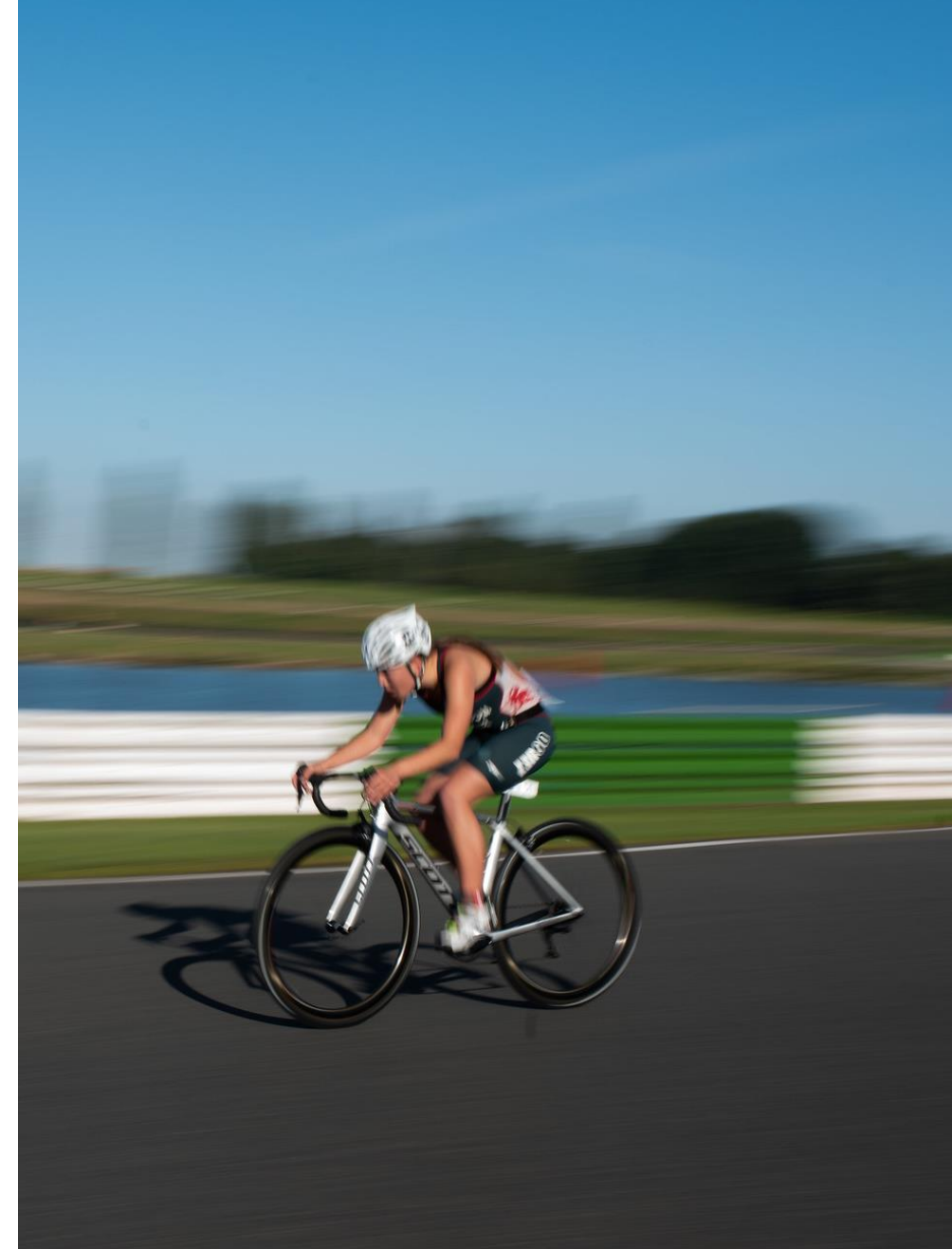
Academy Location & Operation

The Welsh Triathlon Academy Programme (WTAP) is delivered as one programme that caters for athletes all around Wales. The programme is delivered across two squads; Transition (15-19 years old) and Development (17-19 years old) and through a combination of coach mentor support and national camps.

The Development squad is for athletes aged 17-19 years old (juniors). The purpose is to support athletes to explore their potential in triathlon through positive experiences and clearly defined goals and to provide guidance through key transitional periods from junior to under 23/senior. Athletes will only be selected into this squad after a minimum of six months on the Transition Squad.

The Transition squad is for athletes aged 15-19 years old (youth and juniors). The purpose is to provide athletes with additional support and positives experiences to help them identify their own personal development goals and expose them to elements of performance triathlon.

Wales offers fantastic locations to train and so we make use of a number of different facilities and venues around the country. Due to our partnership with Sport Wales, we often use their facilities in Cardiff and their activity Centre, Plas Menai, in North Wales, as a base for most of our camps.



Activity Plan

Annual Academy activity works as follows,

- All Academy athletes will have some form of contact and/or activity on a monthly basis as a mixture of camps, training days and coach phone calls.
- Academy years run October to September. There are two selection points per year to allow more opportunity for an athlete to be selected.
- During the winter, activities have a more Training as Play focus. In Spring that focus turns to race prep and during the summer it's on racing and the British Super Series
- Where possible, we run joint camps with some of the English Academies throughout the year where greater athlete numbers contribute to a more positive and challenging athlete experience.

Academy Selection

There are two selection points per year, one in September and the other in February. Athletes apply via an online entry form and enter times across swim, bike (dustbin test) and run performances. All athletes, whether new or returning, are required to go through the process. Selection to either squad in September gives an athlete a year as part of the Academy however those selected in February will need to reapply in the following September. For younger athletes, results in their local Junior Series and/or the Inter Regional Championship (IRC) are no guarantee of entry to the Academy.

More information and access to the application form can be found [here](#)



Application

Applications are open to all athletes who will be aged between 15 and 19* in the following competitive season i.e. will be a Youth A, Youth B or Junior. Athlete age for Academy selection is taken as **age on the day (1st September or 1st February)**. Applications will require athletes to evidence the following distances:

Swim: 50m, 200m/400m and 800m/1500m

Bike: Dustbin Test

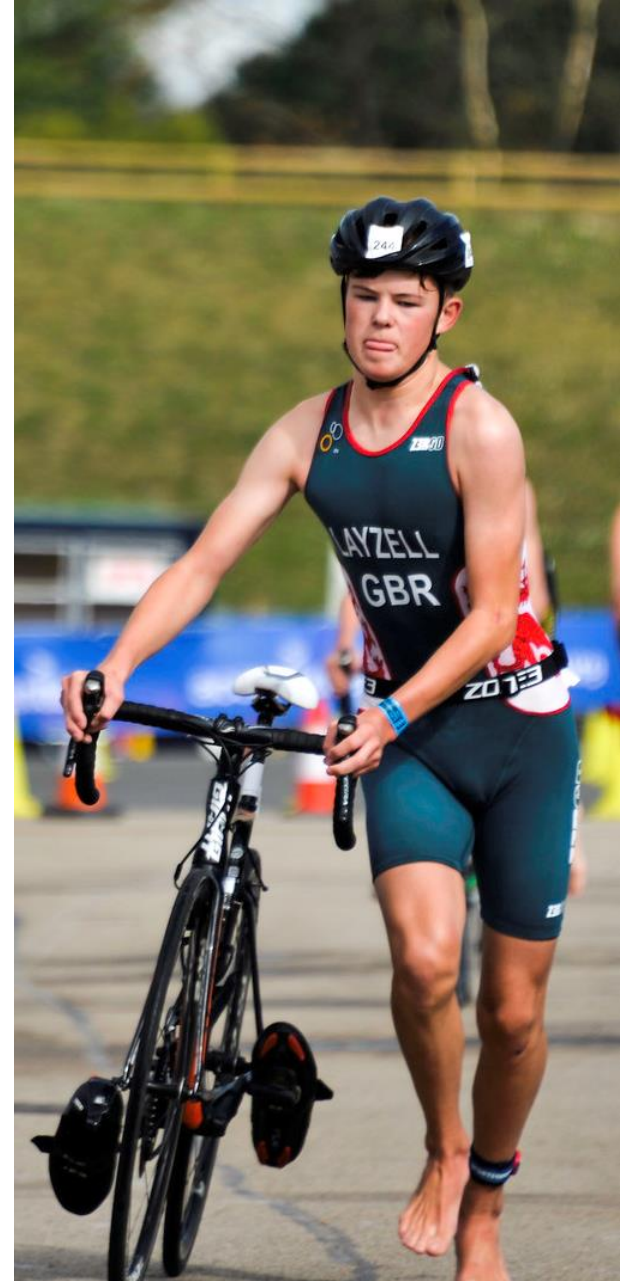
Run: 400m and 1500m/3000m.

Performances will need to be verified e.g., appear on the British Swimming or UK Athletics databases or be coach verified with video evidence.

Welsh Triathlon uses a swim/bike/run profiling table to indicate an athlete's age and stage potential at this level of the Pathway. The scores required for each squad varies and is shown in more detail on the Welsh Triathlon website.

Swimming, running and the requisite performance behaviours play a big part in Academy selections and are the priority at this stage of the Pathway. However, the Dustbin test on the bike determines an athletes basic technical ability. Athletes who do not have any cycling or triathlon experience are very much encouraged to apply and if selected into an Academy will be supported to develop their riding.

applications are considered from athletes new to the Academy aged 18 and 19 assuming such athletes are **on a rapidly improving trajectory and/or **new to the sport**.*



Scoring Matrix for Development and Transition Squads

Criteria	Development	Transition
Physical - This comprises of your swim, bike & run scores	A minimum* of 16/30 points is required	A minimum* of 12/30 points is required
Technical & Skills - This includes your swimming and running technical/movement quality and your open water and transition skills.	No formal scoring	No formal scoring
Psychology - This section considers the areas below: A- Knowledge & Understanding and Organisation & Planning B- Ownership & Independence and Motivation & Engagement C- Pressure & Resilience and Race-Craft & Decision-Making	No formal scoring	No formal scoring

Context Factors

- Race Experience- how much have you raced. What level of racing have you competed in.
- Training Load/History- how much training have you done across swim, bike, run over the last few years.
- Maturation/Relative Age Effect (RAE)- What stage of biological maturation and physical development are you at? RAE refers to the concept that children born early in their year of birth perform more highly than children born later in the same cohort.

****Meeting the minimum score does not guarantee selection.***



Section 3

Academy advice and guidance

Safeguarding & Welfare

We work hard to create environments for all Pathway athletes that are fun, engaging and support you to be better. To achieve this, you should always feel safe, be treated with respect whilst taking part in Academy programme activity, while similarly also showing respect to others.

If you are at all worried about that way you, or any other athletes in your environment, are being treated by others please speak to an adult that you trust. This could be a parent, your coach or the Academy Welfare Officer, who will be identified when you are inducted into the Programme. If a situation is more serious, the Home Nation Welfare Officer or the BTF Safeguarding Manager may also be contacted via concern@britishtriathlon.org.

If there is not an adult that you feel comfortable talking to or trust in the environment, please call Childline on 0800 11 11 or visit [Childline's Website](https://www.childline.gov.uk). If you believe you are in immediate danger from an adult or other young person, please contact the Police on 999.

BTF have created a resource for young triathletes to refer to in order to help you identify what behaviours are not appropriate, how to treat others and who to contact if you feel unsafe In any way. The resource can be found [here](#):

BTF have also created a young person's resource to help you stay safe online. It can be found [here](#):





Pathway Mental Health Care Referral Process



It is very normal (and healthy) for humans to experience a whole range of emotions in daily life. It is important to be aware of how you might spot the difference between normal, functional emotions and a mental health problem. Mental health problems are characterised by symptoms (including but not limited to things such as low mood; feelings of anxiety; dampened emotions) that last longer than two weeks and that are having a significant impact on daily life (including but not limited to things such as significant change in sleep patterns; change in eating behaviours; withdrawal from social situations).

If you have concerns about your mental health, we would recommend that you speak to an adult you trust such as a parent, coach, or a relevant Welfare Officer. If you need further support, then they may suggest that you visit your GP to explore further help.

Young Minds [website](#) is a useful resource to help you identify your feelings, give you tips to cope and to reach out for further support if you need it.

Mind [website](#) is a similarly useful resource

If you find yourself in an emergency struggling with your mental health, dial 999.

British Triathlon works with UKAD and World Triathlon to promote clean sport and the values of the UKAD's 100% Me programme. All athletes at Next Generation level will be provided with regular anti-doping education appropriate to their age and stage of performance development via their Academy Programme.

Everything you need to know on anti-doping including prohibited lists, the use of and how to check medications along with testing procedures along with a lot of other useful information can be found [here](#) on the British Triathlon Clean Sport pages.

And/or you can download UKAD's Clean Sport app for [apple](#) or [android](#). We'd also recommend getting the Global DRO [app](#) to check any medication you are required to take.

Athletes under 18 can be subject to a Doping Control (tested) without parental consent. It is recommended that all athletes take a representative to Doping Control with them. If an under 18 athlete does not take a representative with them, then two Doping Control Officers/Chaperones will be present during the procedures and process. Athletes at this age and stage of the Pathway who are taking medically prescribed but prohibited medication are not required to let us or UKAD know, instead they are able to apply for a retroactive TUE (temporary use exemption) if tested. Athletes can use the [TUE wizard](#) to see what type of exemption is needed.

Reporting any concerns about antidoping in triathlon can be done via our website [here](#) or you can go directly to

UKAD's site [here](#). Or alternatively you can get in touch with us via cleansport@britishtriathlon.org

If you would like to speak to someone about anti-doping at British Triathlon please contact your relevant Home Nation Programme.



Long Term Athlete Development



Whole Athlete Development

Training as Play is the first pillar of the ADF for a reason, triathlon is a physical sport and successful senior athletes will inevitably have done a lot of training in developing their love of the sport. Being supported and guided to love what you do is critical.

However, it isn't all about swim/bike and run either, whole person or whole athlete development is fundamental – we have a strong belief that better people make better athletes. Independent learning, problem solving and decision making are hugely important for longer term success in this sport. Our leading athletes regularly operate independently without coach support, given the hours involved it is impossible for coaches to support all training sessions. In addition triathlon races are very dynamic with athletes being constantly required to make decisions. In line with the ADF you should be supported to explore all the pillars and within each to start to take guided ownership and responsibility of your learning journey. At all points efforts should be made to actively expose you and let you explore the decision-making process that will support your 'whole' development.

Swimming, for developing athletes, should lead both the volume and frequency of a training schedule. On average Academy athletes will swim between 6-12 hours per week, depending on squad, age, level and ability as well as other commitments. Unfortunately most triathlon clubs are not able to offer the number of sessions required to enable this volume to be achieved so joining a swim squad or club is essential. It is important to remember that most all swimming squads will not just grade their swimmers in freestyle (front crawl), so being competent in all four strokes will likely be vital to progress within a club/squad and will also improve your all round swimming competency. Being a swim club member gives access to 'open meets' as well as County, Area and National Championships. Times from all such events will be recorded on the British Swimming **database** and so can be used to evidence your swim ability for Academy applications.



Running

Running as the final discipline of a triathlon is obviously important. If not already, look to become a member of a running club and start running events on the track, events such as 800/1500/3000m/5000m and Park Runs are all, at the right time, appropriate for development. Depending on age, your 1500 (Youth) or 3000m (Junior) track time should be of prime importance. All official club and open athletics meetings will have times logged on UK Athletics **Power of 10** website.

Cross Country running is very much encouraged. Given the required strength and aerobic robustness elements there is a strong functional cross over from Cross Country running to off the bike Triathlon running.

Running, given the impact through the body and in particular feet and lower legs, should be introduced slowly and with coached support.



Cycling

Group riding skills such as ability to draft or ride ‘on the wheel’ and in close proximity to others on a bike is very important in Performance Triathlon. Joining a local cycling group/club or cycling with the local triathlon club is beneficial for cycling and triathlon related skills. In general, just ‘riding a bike’ will help to develop cycling skills and fitness, whether road, mountain bike or cyclo-cross. However, athletes are encouraged to do as much group riding as possible. Bike races are frequent across and athletes who have mastered group riding skills are encouraged to race in any of the endurance cycling disciplines – cyclo-cross (winter) or road, time trial (TT) or mountain bike (summer). Group riding skills are essential as all British Super Series Youth and Junior triathlons are draft legal. At the same time, TT racing can help with developing pacing and learning about riding aerodynamically. Finally riding on rollers regularly is very much advised for developing riders as they promote the basic fundamentals of cycling; being well balanced on the bike along with fluid pedalling and cadence. Gear restrictions and wheel regulations are also important to understand and these are discussed on page 44.



Strength & Conditioning

Regular strength and conditioning (S&C) should be a priority as it underpins the robustness and flexibility required across all three disciplines, as well as in other sports. Providing the programme is appropriate for the age and development (maturation) of the athlete and managed by a qualified S&C coach or physio, it will prevent injury and enable consistency in their training programme.

S&C is not just about going to the gym, a good programme can be done at home, on your own and with very limited equipment. British Triathlon has a guide available that can be used to form the basis of a regular routine, which allows flexibility to add specific exercises if required to underpin any weaknesses or identified needs. This can be found [here](#). Whilst these exercises are a great guide and, as stated previously, we would advise any athlete undertaking an S&C programme to seek advice from a qualified coach in your locality.



Training balance across the three disciplines

It is difficult to give general advice on Triathlon training as all athletes have different strengths and weaknesses within each discipline and all are developing at different rates.

There are some common principles here though;

- Involve the athlete in the decision making process (Informed Choice) to help to build their understanding of what they are doing in training (Intelligent Training) and guide them in taking small steps to build towards them taking some ownership of their overall programme (Learning to Lead)
- For all athletes, until well into the Junior age group, swimming should be the priority discipline in terms of weekly volume/training hours. Running and cycling can be developed more quickly, especially when an athlete has the strong aerobic background that swimming gives.
- At Pathway level running comes next and we'd suggest, if not already, athletes have access to some form of (young athlete) appropriate run sessions e.g. athletics/running club from the age of 13/14
- Cycling has less impact on the body in terms of weight bearing and so can be introduced more quickly than running but again for the vast majority of younger athletes should not detract from swimming being the main focus up to the ages of at least 17/18.
- If you are concerned about too much activity each week, focus on swimming and keep the running/cycling 'ticking over' (e.g. 1 session per week) when younger
- Having a good relationship with a trusted coach in your locality is encouraged – this could either be a triathlon coach, perhaps at your local club, or one (or more) of an athlete's single discipline coaches. A coach who knows the athlete and their strengths/weaknesses is invaluable in supporting the development process



Competition

We very much view competition as a series of learning and development opportunities for younger athletes and we have a dedicated webpage [here](#) that includes a lot of useful information as well as links to other relevant pages on the website.

British Youth and Junior Super Series

Domestically our primary focus is the British Youth and Junior Super Series, it is designed to give athletes the chance to race at a high (national) level on multiple occasions each season. It provides excellent opportunities and is a key part of the suite of experiences we feel are necessary to support athlete development through the Academy years. Where possible races are spread out across the country and evenly through the season. Course design and venues are also looked at to support athletes in experiencing a broad range of racing styles and types e.g.

- Format – single race / heats and finals / mixed team relay / triathlon / aquathlon
- Swim – beach / pontoon / deep water start / salt water / fresh water
- Bike/Run- flat, rolling and hilly bike and run courses

To find out more about the racing opportunities we promote and to see a Competition Map that details a typical racing programme for Academy age athletes please also visit the Competition page [here](#)

Performance Assessments

Results/ranking from the Performance Assessment weekend creates the order of entry for the first Super Series events each season. The weekend also provides both athletes and parents workshops and presentations from World Class and Home Nation Programme staff and athletes designed to better aid and support whole athlete development. More information can be found [here](#)

Equipment and Kit

Whilst important that athletes have the right kit to compete safely we do not expect nor encourage athletes to have the latest pieces of equipment. In most cycling and triathlon clubs there is often a good second hand market and we would certainly encourage this with growing athletes. A longer term focus on development in line with the ADF is always our preference for younger athletes rather than focussing on marginal equipment gains that might help in the short term.

Whilst athletes are required to race in ITU regulation race-suits abroad e.g. country code/ITU logo/athlete name on the suit/no front zip; there is NO expectation to do this at Super Series level. Most Academies will have two to three athletes racing internationally and so Academy race-suits will normally be designed to meet ITU regulations.





Cardiac (CRY) Testing

Sudden death through cardiac arrests is an issue that is steadily gaining more attention due to unfortunate incidents featuring high profile sports people e.g., in football with Christian Eriksen and Fabrice Muamba both suffering cardiac arrests in the middle of games. Some may also be aware of the sad passing of cyclists Charlie Craig and Rab Wardell as well as triathlete Laurent Vidal in 2015 (4th place 2012 Olympics) due to cardiac arrest in their sleep. Soon after Laurent's death World Triathlon (WT) introduced mandatory heart screening for all athletes racing internationally and given the implications that any heart abnormalities might have for young people in our sport we began offering cardiac screening to all pathway athletes at our Performance Assessment weekend.

CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) is a charity that supports cardiac testing specifically to prevent sudden death from cardiac arrest and their test involves an ECG (electrocardiogram) that is read by a cardiologist.

While CRY testing is available, and actively encouraged, at the Performance Assessments it is not obligatory, however, any athletes racing, or having aspirations to race internationally, will need a CRY test or ECG carrying out every two years as part of the WT Pre Participation Evaluation that is mandatory for entry any WT sanctioned event. More information on this can be found in our Performance Parents and/or Next Generation Handbooks.

Gear Restrictions

Athletes at Youth age race on restricted gears in all drafting events and they're in place for a number of reasons;

- Improved pedalling technique – the higher cadences require athletes to improve this
- Development of race-craft – groups form more easily when athletes are restricted, this supports the development of better race craft, decision making and tactical awareness/understanding
- Impact of Physical development – without restrictions more physically developed athletes can rely on riding bigger gears to beat less developed athletes. Reliance on power doesn't work at senior level; race-craft, guile and decision making does.
- Energy Expenditure – racing in a bunch is stochastic. Riding at a higher cadence allows athletes to manage these pace changes more smoothly with less energy cost. Restricting gears helps develop a higher cadence.
- Competitive Advantage - A high number of senior athletes (male and female) in drafting triathlon do not pedal well. Exploiting this has performance impact for our athletes internationally.
- Athlete Development - Whichever path an athlete follows; drafting, non-drafting or life-long participation, the opportunity to develop efficient pedalling technique will be of benefit.
- Athlete Education - Learning to restrict gears means athletes will have to develop a keener understanding of how their bike works mechanically.
- Reduced Injury Risk - A lot of young athletes ride bikes set up for adults that are inappropriate for their stage of physical development. Riding age appropriate gears lowers the force production needed through each pedal stroke and reduces injury risk.

While gear restrictions are important in racing they should also be adhered to in training too, developing effective pedalling techniques takes time and will not happen by racing alone on restricted gears. More information on gear restrictions and wheel regulations (that are particularly important for youth athletes to be aware of) can be found on our website [here](#)

