

COMPETITION CHANGES U14 & U16 DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIPS

October 2025



INTRODUCTION

As part of **scottishathletics'** strategic review of championship competition structures, a key area of focus is improving athlete retention and development during key transition phases, particularly the U14 and U16 age groups. Data from competition entry trends and club feedback shows that athlete drop-off often coincides with rigid event structures and lack of recognition beyond podium finishes.

This document outlines the proposed changes to the District Track & Field Championships that aim to:

- Encourage a multi-discipline approach at U14 level
- Provide a clearer development pathway into individual competition at U16
- Increase participation capacity and reduce waiting lists
- Include and recognise a greater number of athletes, supporting retention and enjoyment

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

1. U14: MULTI-DISCIPLINE FORMAT

New Format (from 2026):

- Athletes select 3 events from a full programme:
 - 2 track + 1 field, or
 - 2 field + 1 track
- All track events will be timed finals (no heats/semis). Field events will be limited to 4 trials per athlete
- Athlete performances will be scored using standard scoring tables (eg. SATS tables) and cumulative points will determine individual recognition

Athlete Recognition:

- Athletes achieving points thresholds will be awarded Gold, Silver or Bronze awards
- A team trophy will be awarded to the top club (6 athletes to count) recognising broad participation and club representation





Rationale:

- Encourages skill diversity in early development years
- Reduces pressure to specialise prematurely
- Significantly increases athlete capacity by eliminating heats/finals and field event finals, and allows athletes to take part in more individual events since they will not compete over multiple rounds
- Expands recognition beyond top 3 finishers, promoting enjoyment and motivation
- This format will inform the structure of national competition in the future.

2. U16: MAINTAIN FULL INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMME WITH STRUCTURED PROGRESSION

Retain Traditional Format:

- Athletes enter individual events
- Heats, semi-finals and finals retained where appropriate
- Individual medals awarded for top 3 finishers per event

Additions & Improvements:

- Ensure clear communication on qualification rules and competition progression
- Schedule events to prevent excessive athlete clashes and manage load wherever possible

Rationale:

- Supports athletes ready to specialise in an event group or refine event choices
- Offers realistic experience of senior competition formats
- Prepares athletes for traditional national championships and beyond
- Complements U14 multi-discipline approach by offering a logical next step

VOLUNTEER AND CLUB SUPPORT

Successful delivery of this new format will rely heavily on:

- Volunteers and officials understanding new rules and scoring systems
- Clubs promoting multi-discipline entry and supporting athlete preparation
- Event day volunteers to assist with event delivery in each of the three districts

scottishathletics will supply supporting materials, scoring information and guidance in advance of the outdoor season.

CONCLUSION

These changes to the District Championships represent a key opportunity to better-engage athletes aged 12–15, reduce barriers to entry and align competitions with long-term athlete development. Through increased flexibility, broader recognition and structured progression, we aim to support more young people to stay in the sport - and thrive. We welcome club support in communicating, delivering and evaluating these exciting new changes.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Phase	Timeline	Actions
Communication	Oct-Dec 2025	Publish format changes to clubs and coaches
Indoor Season Prep	Jan-Mar 2026	Planning with officials and volunteers
Outdoor Rollout	May-June 2026	New U14 & U16 formats trialled at District Championships
Review & Refine	Summer 2026	Gather feedback; prepare for possible future revisions at District and/or National level