



ROYAL YACHTING ASSOCIATION UPDATE: ELITE SPORT STATUS FOR THE PURPOSE OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Updated: 02 March 2021

Following the introduction of new legislation and further guidance from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the RYA has announced an update to its process for the awarding of elite status to sailors and support staff.

Throughout the pandemic, the RYA has at all times sought to play our part in protecting public health while supporting the safe return to boating and the continued development of the country's top sailors. We believe the criteria for awarding elite status that we have established are a responsible interpretation of the DCMS regulations, which recognise the significance of international travel for our sport.

All members of the British Sailing Team understand that the awarding of elite status is a privilege at a time when the country is subject to strict limitations on travel, and we are thankful to colleagues at DCMS for their continued work to support and protect the elite status exemption during this time.

Criteria for attaining elite status

Possession of an elite status letter, issued by the RYA, can enable sailors and support staff to leave the country for reasons specified in the section below (if accepted for entry into the destination country).

Elite status does not necessarily provide exemption from quarantine obligations upon exiting or returning to the UK, it only allows an elite sailor to continue their training and/or competition within UK and at all other times during the specified period they must self-isolate.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules#elite-sportspersons--domestic>

To be awarded an elite status letter, in summary, individuals must meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Be able to evidence that they earn their living from competing in sailing. The RYA will require evidence of remuneration in the form of a written agreement with a professional sailing team or other relevant sailing source; or
2. Are members of the British Sailing Team; or
3. Be able to evidence that they are supporting an individual who satisfies the definition of 'domestic elite sportsperson' (as summarised in points 1-2).

Under the current legislation we are unfortunately unable to provide elite status letters to all sailors wishing to compete internationally. We know that this may be frustrating to sailors and their supporters, however we hope to be able to support these sailors to resume competition overseas soon. In the meantime, we are working hard to ensure that we can restart domestic competition as soon as Government guidance allows and navigating the challenges that have arisen as a result of Brexit.

Changes to DCMS rules on elite status

On Thursday, 11 February, the DCMS announced a tightening of the rules on overseas travel for elite status holders, and an increase in the transparency and monitoring procedures which NGBs must follow in its administration. The new rules on elite status exemptions in England permit the following:

- Travel to international competitions for qualifying sailors and their ancillary support.
- Travel overseas for training purposes for qualifying sailors and their ancillary support, but only for those training for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Under the new Government rules, we can no longer provide an elite status exemption for the following purposes:

- Travel overseas for training for domestic elite sportspersons not training for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Travel for multinational ancillary sportspersons (e.g. coaches) if they are supporting a sailor who is not a domestic elite sportsperson (i.e. a sailor who qualifies to represent GB).

The RYA is now required to report on the number of exemptions which we have granted at regular intervals. The RYA are committed to complying with every aspect of the government guidance relating to the phased return of elite sport - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on the phased return of elite sport - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-the-phased-return-of-elite-sport)

Director of Racing, Ian Walker said: “This has been an incredibly challenging period for everyone, but especially challenging for professional sailors and for members of the British Sailing Team focussed on Tokyo 2021.

“Our top sailors rely on International training and competition, particularly in the winter months – and we will continue to work with colleagues at UK Sport and DCMS to try to make sure that they get the opportunities they need, whilst continuing to operate within Government guidelines.”

Olympic Performance Manager, Mark Robinson, added: “As we enter the final stages of our preparations for the Tokyo Olympics it is critical that our sailors are able prepare through training and racing overseas and against the best competition in the world. We are very grateful to DCMS, UK Sport and the Weymouth and Portland Sailing Academy for their ongoing work and support.”

Any racing sailors with queries or who believe they fit these criteria and are entitled to elite sport status are asked to submit requests to racing@rya.org.uk at least two weeks prior to travel.

Please state your RYA Membership number when submitting a request. Not yet a member? Join today and support the RYA in protecting your boating rights and freedoms. Take advantage of free advice and support, as well as enjoying a range of fantastic personal member offers. Find out more by calling 023 8060 4159, email member.services@rya.org.uk or visit www.rya.org.uk.
