

Guidance: Writing references for candidate direct entry applications

July 2024



Scope: This guidance is for Accredited Professional Coaches and Approved Riding Centres.

As an Accredited Professional Coach or Approved Riding Centre you may be approached by learners to provide a reference confirming their suitability to apply for direct entry to a BHS Assessment based on their equine experience.

To provide a coach reference,

- you must be a current APC or a coach within a BHS Approved Riding Centre
- you must be familiar with the different direct entry routes available into our assessments
- you must be familiar with the entry requirements (pre-requisites) into our assessments

Further information on our direct entry routes is [on our website](#). The reference provided by you is to support route 2 listed on the website.

What is direct entry based on equine experience?

Direct entry is available for learners who want to enter the BHS pathway above Stage 1 but don't hold standard entry requirements.

Learners may have instead of standard entry requirements:

- equine qualifications that do not map to BHS qualifications
- no formal qualifications,
- significant industry experience or competition history.

For direct entry applications, learners are asked to provide evidence that they have the required pre-requisite knowledge and skills to enter their chosen assessment.

An application is completed online and should include:

- their equine CV
- copies of any relevant certificates and a breakdown of units covered (if applicable)
- a detailed reference from an APC
- copies of recent affiliated competition results (if applicable)
- application fee

Learners submit the above information for review. An Assessor Endorsement will then be required from a BHS Assessor who will spot check the learner's skills to ensure they are at the required pre-requisite standard. Guidance will be given to both the learner and Assessor regarding the observations required.

What is the purpose of the coach reference?

The coach reference is a crucial part of a direct entry application.

The coach reference is to confirm the learner has the knowledge and skills to meet the entry requirements for the assessment they want to enter. For example, if they are requesting entry to the Stage 2 Care assessment, they need to provide evidence in their application they have the skills and knowledge covered in the Stage 1 Care. Learners don't have to prove they are at the standard to pass the assessment they are requesting entry to as that will be done on the assessment day.

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For entry to BHSI level assessments, learners must provide evidence they have trained to the required level. Please see further guidance below.

In most circumstances we would expect you to be approached by learners you know and have previously trained or are currently training. In these references you should provide evidence of skills and knowledge you have seen the learner demonstrate.

If you are approached by a learner you do not know you may need to observe them over one or more sessions to ensure you have observed all the skills required. These observations could be carried out during training sessions or specific mock assessment situations.

You should only provide evidence for skills, knowledge and understanding you have witnessed first-hand. If you are approached for a reference you can [contact the BHS Education Team](#) should you have any queries.

What should be covered in the reference?

Learners applying to enter Stages 1-4 Care, Lunge, Ride or Coaching.

Learners can apply to enter any level and/or combination of assessments.

Your reference must describe the tasks and skills you have observed the learner carry out. Example references are given at the end of this document.

Care

You should have observed the learner working safely and efficiently with a range of horses suitable for their level. You should have observed them carrying out the practical skills required in the pre-requisite assessment and have relevant professional discussions.

Riding

The purpose of the riding observation/reference is to ensure learners are safe to enter a riding assessment.

Learners should be observed riding at minimum of two horses before you complete your reference.

- If applying to enter Stage 3 Ride (dressage and/or jump) learners must have been observed on the flat and over fences at Stage 2 standard.
- If applying for the Stage 4 Show Jump or Eventing route learners must have been observed riding on the flat **and** jumping including cross country at Stage 3 standard.
- If applying for Stage 4 Dressage Ride route learners must have evidence of jumping at Stage 2 standard and dressage at Stage 3 Standard.

Lungeing

Learners should have been observed lungeing a minimum of one horse to the required pre-requisite standard. This should include tacking up, adjusting tack and equipment as required and untacking the horse.

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Coaching

All learners applying for **coaching units only must** supply evidence that they have reached a minimum of Stage 2 standard in riding, lungeing and care.

- To enter Stage 3 Coach learners must demonstrate they have covered the Stage 2 Coach syllabus. Your reference should cover all elements of the Stage 2 Coach assessment.
- To enter at Stage 4 Coach learners must demonstrate they have covered the sessions taught at Stage 2 and 3 Coach. Your reference should cover all the required coaching sessions at Stage 2 and 3.

Riding Out

- To enter Stage 3 Riding Out you must have observed all elements of the Stage 2 Riding Out criteria
- To enter Stage 2 Riding Out learners must hold the Ride Safe award and Ride at Stage 1 standard

Ride Safe Award

The Ride Safe award (or accepted equivalent) is required for **all** riding, riding out and coaching routes up to and including Stage 4. You can find more information about becoming a Ride Safe Trainer on the [APC Hub](#)

Submitting a reference

Your reference should refer to the learner by name and clearly state everything you have witnessed.

The reference can be written on your own headed paper or you may wish to use the reference template (provided at the end of this document) so the learner has a clear record of what was covered during the assessment.

References can be typed or hand-written. They must clearly state the learner's name, what has been observed and if, in your opinion, the learner is at the level. All references should be signed and dated and your APC number included.

References should be given to the learner to submit. They should not be submitted directly to BHS Education unless requested by a member of the Education Team.

Your feedback should be discussed with the learner at the time of your observations, especially if the learner is not at the level required.

To meet with the regulatory requirements references must contain sufficient detail of what has been observed. An example of the detail required is included at the end of this document.

What if the learner isn't at the standard required?

If the learner isn't at the required level, you should discuss with them whether they require some further training or if it would be beneficial for them to apply to enter at a lower level to gain more experience and confidence.

Learners applying to enter BHSI assessments

Learners who want to apply to enter at this level are required to complete training with BHS assessor (who assesses at BHSI assessments) or a Fellow (FBHS) within a BHS Approved Riding Centre.

The BHSI Assessor or Fellow will be required to sign off a learner training record for each unit they wish to enter confirming they have received training to the level and provide a separate reference.

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[Training record templates](#) can be downloaded from the website and should be given to the learner to submit with their application.

Where should the observations take place?

It is recommended that you observe learners at a BHS Approved Centre, where they can ride and work with horses similar to those they would get in an assessment situation. However, they can be assessed at their own yard.

Occasionally due to location learners may request to submit video evidence for observations, this is acceptable, but you must give clear guidance to the learner to ensure the evidence they provide to you is suitable.

Do I need to include the Skills Record?

Learners don't need to send in their signed skills record as part of the RPEL application. You should include any coach endorsements as part of your training.

How much should I charge?

Learners are advised that fees for references will vary depending on what they need. All fees should be discussed and agreed with the learner beforehand.

Historical evidence

Learners who no longer ride or no longer ride to the required level, can use historical evidence as part of their application into a Coaching assessment. This includes references, competition records and work history demonstrating how they meet the requirements. They will not be awarded the Complete Horsemanship qualification but can be awarded entry to the coaching assessments.

What qualification will they receive?

In order to achieve a BHS or BHSQ qualification learners are required to achieve all the required BHS or BHSQ units. For example; to achieve BHSQ Level 2 Foundation Coach in Complete Horsemanship learners are required to achieve; Unit 1 Stage 2 Care, Unit 2 Stage 2 Lunge, Unit 3 Stage 2 Ride and Unit 4 Stage 2 Coaching. The references you provide are to support applications to grant entry to qualifications/units and cannot be used to achieve a qualification.

If you require any support or have any questions about providing a reference please contact education@bhs.org.uk

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Example of reference detail required (names have been removed)

Example one

Observation of a Dressage Lesson at Stage 3 Coaching level (to support entry to Stage 4 Coaching Assessment)

I assessed XXXX against the exam requirements and observed her teaching a flat session with a client. XXXX assessed the combination in walk, trot and canter and developed her session to encourage the horse to go forward and maintain a consistent rhythm through the basic paces and improve the basic transitions and way of going, as the session progressed the horse became more balanced and working more forward. XXXX has a good manner and able to communicate well with the rider, she demonstrated safe working practice effective coaching skills and a clear understanding of exercise to help the combination gain confidence and improve, she explained different exercises to use to improve the horses' way of going. At the end of the session XXXX discussed the progression of the session and future development.

Following the session, I discussed with XXXX the roles of the coach, scales of training and her coaching objectives with the horse and rider combination, legal requirements health and safety, first aid, safeguarding, data protection, customer care and the importance of animal welfare.

Example two

Observation of Lungeing to Stage 2 standard (for entry to Stage 3 Lunge)

This candidate tacked a horse up for lungeing correctly. They lunged a quiet horse competently and safely. They exercised the horse well with and without side reins and was effective and was competent handling the equipment. The session lasted for 20 minutes which I observed good use of circle size, sufficient communication with the horse, safe control of the horse maintained, good position of handler and consideration for horse welfare. They reviewed their session well, discussing the horse's way of going.

The candidate discussed the equipment well, also showed experience in discussing reasons for lungeing, factors that may affect the lungeing process and lungeing issues.

I would assess this candidate as being at BHS Stage 2 level in lungeing.

Examples of insufficient detail

Example one

I've seen them teach lessons at camp that would be equivalent to Stage 2 standard.

Example Two

I have seen them ride on the flat and they are fine at Stage 3. I haven't seen this candidate ride on the road but they told me they wear reflective tabards and are safe.

Referee form for (RPEL) Direct Entry Applications



Thank you for providing a reference.

Your reference will support the evidence a learner provides to gain direct entry into a BHS assessment. It is vital that we understand if the learner has the required skills and knowledge to enter at a specific level. Please familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria as we require evidence that the learner has the knowledge and skill requirements to enter their requested assessment/s.

For example, if a learner is applying for entry into BHS Stage 3, supporting evidence would need to show the required level of skill and knowledge to cover the syllabi at Stage 1 and 2.

You may only be able to provide part of this evidence. Please ensure it is clear which part/s of the assessment criteria you are providing a reference for, if necessary.

BHS assessment criteria are available on the BHS website on the pages for each BHS Stage and also on the Accredited Professionals Hub on the 'BHS Assessment Resources' page.

Assessment applicant is requesting entry into: _____

How do you know the applicant? _____

Please use this space to show how the candidate meets the requirements for direct entry.

Please continue on a separate page if necessary

Signed _____

Please print name _____

APC Number _____