

Squads Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Our Philosophy & Pathway Approach

- Every swimmer develops at their own pace
 - The right squad is not necessarily the highest squad
 - Long-term development is more important than short-term results
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What is changing?

We are introducing updates to our Development and Performance pathways and the squads within those pathways.

The revised structure provides progression routes for swimmers and better aligns training expectations, opportunities and support with each stage of swimmer development.

While some squad names, training groups and progression criteria may change, the overall objective remains the same: helping every swimmer develop and progress in an environment that best suits their current stage and future potential.

Why are we making these changes?

Swimming clubs must continually review their programmes to ensure they are meeting the needs of swimmers and reflecting best practice in athlete development.

Following our review, we identified opportunities to:

- Create clearer progression routes
- Improve alignment between squads and swimmer development stages
- Better support swimmers moving through the Development and Performance pathways
- Ensure training opportunities match the needs and goals of each swimmer
- Provide greater transparency around progression expectations

The changes are intended to strengthen the overall pathway and provide a better experience for swimmers and families.

Why have these changes been communicated now?

The changes are being communicated in advance of the new season to give swimmers and families sufficient time to understand the structure, ask questions, and prepare for the transition.

We recognise that changes to training groups and pathways require time for families to process and plan, and we want everyone to feel fully informed well ahead of implementation.

Why are we no longer having a National Squad?

The revised structure aims to place swimmers in training environments that best support their individual development, commitment and future potential, rather than grouping swimmers primarily according to competition outcomes.

Swimmers aspiring to compete at County, Regional and National level will continue to receive the same support, coaching and training opportunities required to achieve those goals.

The removal of a National Squad title should not be interpreted as a reduction in ambition. The club remains fully committed to supporting swimmers with County, Regional and National aspirations.

Why are we moving away from alignment with Swim England County, Regional and National pathways?

While these frameworks remain useful benchmarks, they do not always reflect the full picture of swimmer development.

Our review identified that a development-focused structure provides greater flexibility and allows coaches to make more effective decisions based on training needs, readiness, consistency and long-term progression.

Competition standards remain valuable indicators, but they are only one part of a wider assessment of swimmer development.

This approach allows us to ensure swimmers are placed in the environment where they will develop most effectively, rather than progressing solely based on qualification status.

How do swimmers move squads?

Each squad has defined expectations and progression criteria.

Progression decisions are based on a combination of factors, which may include:

- Attendance and commitment
- Training behaviours and consistency
- Technical development
- Coachability and willingness to learn
- Competition participation and race skills
- Physical and emotional readiness for increased training demands
- Performance standards and times where appropriate
- Long-term athlete development considerations

Coaches will regularly review swimmer progress and will communicate when they believe a swimmer is ready for progression.

The pathway is designed to recognise overall development, not simply achievement of a single time standard.

Why is progression not based only on times?

The right squad is not necessarily the highest squad – it is the squad that best meets a swimmer's current developmental needs.

Swimming performance is about much more than achieving a particular race time. While performance standards may form part of the progression process, they are only one of several factors considered by the coaching team when making squad placement decisions.

When reviewing swimmers for progression, coaches may consider:

- Attendance and training consistency

- Attitude, effort and commitment
- Technical skills and stroke development
- Coachability and willingness to learn
- Competition participation and race skills
- Physical and emotional readiness for increased training demands
- Long-term athlete development considerations
- Performance standards and race times where appropriate

Two swimmers with similar ages or race times may have very different development needs and may therefore be best placed in different squads.

Equally, swimmers progress at different rates. Some swimmers may move through the pathway quickly, while others may spend longer developing the skills, habits and foundations needed for future success.

Our objective is to place swimmers in the environment where they will develop most effectively, rather than progressing swimmers simply because they have achieved a particular time standard.

For this reason, families should avoid comparing squad placements or progression timelines with other swimmers. Every swimmer follows their own journey, and progression decisions are always made with the individual swimmer's long-term development in mind.

Will swimmers automatically move up if they achieve qualifying times?

No. Achieving a qualifying time or performance standard does not automatically result in squad progression.

Coaches consider a range of factors including attendance, attitude, technical development, competition participation, training behaviours and readiness for the next stage of the pathway. Meeting a time standard may indicate that a swimmer is progressing well, but progression decisions are always based on the overall needs and development of the swimmer.

Do swimmers have to spend a minimum time in a squad?

No. There is no minimum time requirement in any squad. Swimmers develop at different rates, and coaches will review progression based on individual readiness rather than time served. Some swimmers may progress quickly through parts of the pathway, while others may benefit from longer periods consolidating skills, habits and training behaviours before moving on.

Can we choose a different squad?

Squad placements are determined by the coaching team based on what they believe is the most appropriate environment for each swimmer's current stage of development. While we understand swimmers and families may have preferences, moving into a different squad outside of the recommended placement is not possible, as squad structures, training volumes and coaching objectives are carefully designed to support swimmer progression.

If a swimmer has been placed in the performance pathway but would prefer to train in the development pathway this is entirely their choice.

If you have concerns about your swimmer's placement, we encourage you to speak with the coaching team so that any questions can be discussed openly and constructively.

I am not sure what squad my swimmer is in

All swimmers have now been informed of their squad placement from the start of the next Season. If you are unsure which squad your swimmer has been allocated to, please contact a member of the coaching team and we will be happy to confirm this for you.

We are unhappy with squad placement

We understand that not every swimmer or family will immediately agree with their squad allocation.

All placements have been carefully considered by the coaching team using a range of factors including swimmer development, training needs, attendance, competition engagement, performance and long-term progression opportunities.

If you have questions or concerns about your swimmer's allocation, we encourage you to contact the coaching team and arrange a discussion. We are happy to explain the reasoning behind placement decisions and discuss the opportunities available within the recommended squad.

We ask families to approach these conversations with an open mind and to recognise that squad allocation decisions are made with the swimmer's best interests and long-term development in mind.

In most cases, swimmers are expected to remain in their allocated squad while development is reviewed over time.

How often do swimmers move squads?

Squad moves will continue to take place throughout the year when swimmers demonstrate that they are ready for progression. We do not want swimmers to feel that progression opportunities only occur at fixed points in the season. Coaches will review swimmer development regularly and may recommend movement when a swimmer is ready.

However, formal pathway and squad structure reviews are expected to occur less frequently and only when there is a clear need to make changes that will benefit swimmers and the club as a whole.

Training, Expectations & Squad Structure

Will training times change?

No changes to training schedules are anticipated currently. If there are any timetable changes, these will be communicated separately before the start of the new season

Swimmers should continue attending their current sessions until the new structure comes into effect.

What if my swimmer cannot attend every session?

We understand that swimmers have commitments outside of swimming, including school, family activities and other interests.

While we encourage swimmers to attend as consistently as possible, coaches recognise that circumstances vary between families. Regular attendance is important for development and progression, but we also encourage swimmers to maintain a healthy balance.

Where squads have attendance criteria these are clearly stated and this can be factored into squad selection for the swimmer.

What should swimmers focus on?

The swimmers who make the most consistent progress typically focus on:

- Attending training regularly
- Listening to and applying coaching feedback
- Demonstrating a positive attitude
- Working hard in every session
- Developing good habits in and out of the pool
- Participating in competitions when appropriate
- Focusing on long-term improvement rather than short-term results

Progression is earned through consistent behaviours over time, not through a single performance.

How are mixed ages and abilities managed in squads?

Swimming is a developmental sport, and it is common for swimmers of different ages and abilities to train together.

The coaching team already manages groups containing swimmers with different strengths, experiences and development needs. Training sessions are planned to allow coaches to differentiate work where required and provide appropriate challenge for all swimmers.

In many cases, training alongside swimmers with different strengths can be beneficial. Younger swimmers can learn from more experienced athletes, whilst older swimmers can develop leadership skills and help create a positive training culture.

Our focus is not on ensuring that every swimmer in a squad is identical, but on ensuring that every swimmer is in an environment that supports their development.

Why do Development and Performance squads sometimes do similar training?

Whilst swimmers may sometimes appear to be completing similar sets, there is often significantly more differentiation within sessions than is immediately visible from the poolside.

Many aspects of swimming development are universal. Technical skill development, aerobic conditioning, race skills, starts, turns and underwater work are important for swimmers across both Development and Performance pathways.

Where appropriate, coaches may deliver similar session themes across multiple squads. However, the expectations, training quality, intensity, volume, technical focus and performance outcomes will vary according to the objectives of each squad.

The revised pathway will help create even greater clarity around the purpose of each squad and the developmental objectives associated with each stage of the programme.

4. Communication, Support & Competition

What if my swimmer struggles in their squad?

Coaches will monitor swimmers closely during training and provide support where needed. If a swimmer is finding the demands of a squad challenging, coaches will work with them and their family to ensure they are in the most appropriate environment for their development. Adjustments may be made where appropriate to support progress and wellbeing.

What if my swimmer is progressing faster than expected?

Swimmer development is reviewed regularly throughout the year. Where swimmers demonstrate readiness for the next stage of the pathway, coaches may recommend progression opportunities outside of any formal review cycle.

Will competition opportunities change?

The changes are intended to support swimmer development and will not limit opportunities to compete. Competition opportunities will continue to be based on swimmer readiness, competition criteria and individual development needs.

Are these changes only about performance results?

No. While performance remains important, the club's objective is to support long-term swimmer development and provide positive experiences for all athletes.

Success is measured through a range of factors including swimmer development, retention, enjoyment, skill acquisition, commitment and performance.

What if a swimmer's goals change?

Swimmers' ambitions can change over time. Some swimmers may wish to pursue higher levels of competition, while others may prioritise enjoyment, fitness or balancing swimming alongside other commitments.

The pathways are designed to provide flexibility, and coaches will work with swimmers to ensure they are in the environment that best supports their goals and development.

How can parents, carers and guardians help?

Parents, guardians and carers play an incredibly significant role in a swimmer's development.

The most valuable support you can provide is to:

- Encourage regular attendance and good habits

- Celebrate effort, improvement and commitment, not just results
- Help swimmers arrive prepared and ready to train
- Support competition participation where appropriate
- Encourage patience and long-term development
- Trust the coaching process and maintain open communication with the club

Swimming development is rarely a straight line. There will be periods of rapid progress and periods where improvements are less obvious. Consistent support and encouragement from home can make a significant difference to a swimmer's confidence and enjoyment.

What if I have more questions?

If it is about your own swimmer - please contact your coach via email or approach them before/ after training.

If it is about the club - Every September, we hold squad parent evenings. We also hold parent information drop ins once a month on a Tuesday night 6pm-8pm at the Hydro's café. These are great opportunities to ask more about the club swimming.