

# An Introduction to the British Academy of Fencing

If you are considering coaching fencing, you will need to select the coaching scheme that best suits you. You should, therefore, find out as much as possible about the scheme and its organisers. In this short brochure, we aim to tell you about the work of the British Academy of Fencing, so that you can make an informed choice on whether to join the Academy, to use its resources, or follow its coaching scheme.

**“The Academy is dedicated to providing support to those teaching and coaching fencing.”**

The British Academy of Fencing is a body run by coaches for coaches, being composed entirely of coaches or former coaches. It has been in existence in its present form for well over half a century and, during that time, has developed many benefits for its members. Membership is open to anyone who holds a qualification recognised by the Academy as meeting its standards. The benefits of membership are many and here we will attempt to introduce you to most of them.

Throughout the brochure, you will be given various points of contact to find out more. As personnel may change, you are advised to go to the Academy's website (<http://www.baf-fencing.com/>) for the latest list of Committee members and their contact email addresses. Otherwise you can contact the *Secretary* of the Academy. The address of the holder of that post at the time of writing is given at the end of the brochure.

**History.** The coaching of fencing in England dates back to a charter given in 1540 to the “Masters of ye Noble Science of Defence” by Henry VIII. Hence the use of this date and the Tudor roses on our badge. The modern Academy was formed in 1949, giving us the second date on the badge. At first it was a purely professional body and restricted to those holding the highest coaching awards, but over time the membership has widened to encompass all levels of coach who “conduct themselves in a professional manner”, whether amateur or professional.



**Summary of the Benefits of joining the BAF.** This brochure will cover a number of the services of the Academy, the main ones being:

*Coaching Awards*  
*Membership*  
*Insurance*  
*Courses*  
*Examinations*  
*Documentation*  
*Proficiency Awards*

**"What I have most appreciated over the last few years are the increased efforts made to take care of and instruct the grass roots members."**

*John Brook, Member*

**Objectives.** The Academy is mainly concerned with the furtherance and improvement in fencing in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It seeks to promote the highest professional standards in its member coaches. All its members are bound by the Articles of the Academy, its Code of Ethics and Conduct, and its Health and Safety Guidelines.

**“I am very grateful for all dedication, commitment, support and friendship I have got from the Academy Committee, Course staff and all members of the Academy.”**

*Miguel Rodriguez Medina,  
Overseas Member*

It aims to provide a system of coach education, which can be the basis for qualification through examination and further improvement throughout the coach's working life.

It promotes the correct use of terminology and provides definitions of fencing terms. In this way, all our coaches should be speaking a common “language” of fencing.

It represents the interests of its members, both internally, by settling disputes between members and applying the disciplinary code of the Academy, and, externally, by dealing with other bodies. The Committee of the Academy consists of members who, between them, have vast experience of all levels of fencing. The Academy is affiliated to Sports Coach UK (formerly the National Coaching Foundation).

**Organisation.** The day-to-day running of the Academy is conducted by a Committee, elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The A.G.M. gives everyone a chance to have a say in the running of the Academy. All members are entitled to attend the A.G.M., which is followed by a Dinner, at which various awards are made. Whilst most of the Committee posts are held by Masters of the Academy, there is always a *Members' Representative*, to ensure that all sections of the membership can make their voice heard. Willing volunteers at all levels are welcome on the Committee.

**Coaching Awards.** The coach education system of the Academy has been developed and refined over many years. In the past few years there has been a considerable analysis of all our syllabuses and examinations to produce an internationally recognised coach education system fit for the needs of the modern fencer and his/her coach. These awards are accepted by Local Authorities, fencing clubs and courses, and will certainly grace any coach's CV.

There are five levels of coaching awards at each weapon:

**Level One:** This is the initial teaching award and covers the teaching of basic fencing moves at beginner level.

**Level Two** (sometimes referred to as **Basic**): Here the range of strokes to be *taught* is extended and the concept of *coaching* is introduced.

**Level Three** (also known as **Intermediate**): The full range of fencing strokes is *taught* and there is further development of *coaching* techniques.

**Level Four:** This is the **Advanced coaching** award.

**Level Five (Diploma):** This is the highest coaching award awarded to Fencing Masters. Holders of this award are competent to train fencers of international standard and to supervise the education of coaches under our Coach Education Scheme.

**Levels of Membership.** There are various levels of membership of the Academy, determined mainly by the qualifications held:

**Maîtres d'Armes:** These are the full Diploma Masters of the Academy, holding Diploma Awards in all three weapons, as well as having completed the appropriate written papers. Members at this level can use the title *Professor*.

**Maîtres d'Escrime:** This is for members who have achieved the Diploma award in one or two weapons, who can use the title *Maître*.

**Provosts:** Members who have passed the Advanced coaching award at all three weapons, together with the appropriate written papers are known as *Provosts*.

**Members:** This is open to anyone who holds a coaching award at Level Two or above at any weapon.

**Associates of the Academy:** Open to holders of a Level One award.

**Retired Members:** Former members who are no longer working and do not need insurance.

**Overseas Members:** Members at any level who are domiciled outside the UK.

There are also a number of members who have received honorary memberships, usually as a result of long and meritorious service to the Academy and fencing. These include a **President of Honour**, a **President Emeritus**, several **Life Members** and **Honorary Members**.

The Academy admits members subject to suitable qualifications. These are normally BAF awards, but overseas awards, which can be shown to be of a suitable level, or awards gained prior to 1988 under the joint BAF/AFA scheme are acceptable. Other awards, wherever they have been obtained, can be considered by the Committee of the Academy.

If you want to join the Academy, you can obtain details from the *Membership Secretary*.

**Insurance.** This is an important benefit for the working coach. Whether you coach in just one Club, or have a circuit of classes in various places, you have taken on the responsibility for your pupils' safety. In the modern world, you really need insurance cover. Indeed, most schools and local authorities insist on seeing proof of such cover before you are allowed to take up a coaching post. The Academy has a policy, which covers all its members, except overseas and retired members, for the needs of their coaching. The full policy is held by the Secretary, but, in brief, the benefits are Public Liability Indemnity of £5,000,000 and Professional Indemnity of £1,000,000.



**Courses.** As part of its Coach Education Scheme, the Academy organises various courses. The main courses are the two residential courses, held at Easter and in the summer. These are usually of five days duration, followed by an Examination day. They have proved to be very popular and successful in recent years, with a very high pass rate in the exams, and have attracted candidates from all around the world, including Sweden, the USA and Japan!

In addition there are a number of shorter courses and seminars, as well as courses organised around the country by Academy Coach Educators. Details of these courses can be obtained from the *Course Officer*.



The Academy's courses are open to all, but one perk of BAF membership is a discount on the main BAF courses. Regular attendance at BAF courses during your progress through the coaching ranks can offset most of your membership fee!

**Examinations.** Examination days are regularly held by the Academy, either as part of a course, or as stand-alone events. They are open to all and details can be obtained from the *Course Officer*.

**“Nicely structured and helped to build up my confidence.”**

**“Very useful – well documented and presented.”**

**“Well planned and balanced.”**

*Course pupils' comments on Feedback Forms.*

For Level Two and above, the Academy uses a Board system of examination, where the candidates give lessons in front of a board of three examiners. The questions are chosen at random by the candidate drawing numbered cards at the start of the examination day. All questions are published and candidates can prepare all the lessons in advance as part of their training. This system is used to maintain the high standards of the Academy. The three examiners must reach a broad consensus about the abilities of each candidate against known criteria. The guidance notes for examiners are available for all to see and are contained on the CD-ROM of examination material (see below) or from the *Course Officer*. Our standards are also maintained by the selection of examiners – each potential examiner must sit in on a number of boards, judging each candidate separately. Their opinions must broadly match those of more experienced examiners before they are accredited as examiners in their own right.

The Academy has produced an examination system that is fair, transparent and of a standard in which any successful candidate can take pride.

**Documentation.** The Academy has produced a range of documents and other items to help coaches at all levels. These can be obtained via the *Course Officer*:

*Key Teaching Points Foil*

*Key Teaching Points Epee*

*Key Teaching Points Sabre*

*Key Coaching Points Foil*

*Key Coaching Points Epee*

*Key Coaching Points Sabre*

*Glossary of Terms - A to Z of Fencing*

*Translation of Fencing Terms in Four Languages (English, French, German & Italian)*

*Teaching/ Coaching Tactics*

*CD-Rom 4.0 Issue* – this contains all the syllabuses and current questions for BAF examinations, as well as other examination material.

*Examples of past written Papers* – for the Advanced and Diploma examinations



In 2004, the Academy held a weekend seminar, conducted by the eminent Polish coach, Dr. Zbigniew Czajkowski. Dr Czajkowski is one of the world's leading coaching authorities, having published many books and having given courses and seminars throughout the world. He is also an Honorary Member of the BAF. The proceedings were recorded on videotape and a series of three DVDs was made. These cover many aspects of coaching, both theoretical and practical, and are a useful reference for any coach, at any level. Copies can be obtained from the *Treasurer*.

As a back up to our Awards scheme (see below), there are booklets covering basic theory for each weapon. These are available through the *Awards Administrator*.

In addition to these resources for coaches, the Academy publishes a Newsletter several times a year. This contains news of the Academy and upcoming courses, articles of interest to coaches on all aspects of fencing and a forum for members to let their own views become more widely known. For more immediate news and general information about the Academy, there is also the website, <http://www.baf-fencing.com/>





**Proficiency Awards.** Coaches need to keep their pupils motivated and give them something at which to aim. The Academy has produced a Proficiency Award Scheme covering the basics of fencing. They are in three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold, and should be capable of completion over the three terms of a school year. At each level, the pupil receives a certificate and lapel badge. The scheme can be used by all coaches, not just Academy members, and further details can be obtained from the *Awards Administrator*.

Hopefully, by the time your pupils have reached the Gold Standard, the “bug” will have bitten and they will be starting to compete regularly.

**The Working Coach.** The Academy is here to help its members. Upon joining, you will receive a copy of the Articles of the BAF, Guidelines for Health and Safety and the Code of Ethics and Conduct. The Academy regularly publishes its recommendations for a scale of fees, which can prove invaluable when negotiating with a prospective employer. There is also advice available on common problems, such as setting a circuit of jobs or running a club. The *Members’ Representative*, in particular, is here to help you.

**Conclusion.** The British Academy of Fencing is a well-established organisation with a proven track record. It is also constantly reviewing its performance to keep up-to-date and meet the need of the modern fencing coach. It has an excellent coach education scheme, which is fully thought out, from top to bottom, and aims to give a coach a good grounding in all aspects of fencing. The examination system is firm but fair, leading ultimately to internationally recognised awards of a high standard. All this is backed up with a wealth of material to support the coach at all stages of his/her career. Couple this with essential features such as good insurance and can you, as an ambitious fencing coach, afford not to join? Remember, this is an Academy run by coaches for coaches.

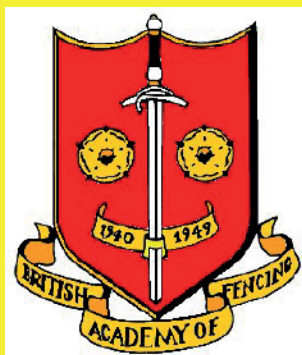
**Contacts.** The names of the current holders of Committee posts are to be found on the website. The following email addresses will reach those who have been mentioned in this brochure:

*President*  
*Membership Secretary*  
*Course Officer*  
*Awards Administrator*  
*Treasurer*  
*Secretary*  
*Members’ Representative*

president@baf-fencing.com  
membership@baf-fencing.com  
courseofficer@baf-fencing.com  
awards@baf-fencing.com  
treasurer@baf-fencing.com  
secretary@baf-fencing.com  
membersrep@baf-fencing.com



If you think you are qualified for membership of the British Academy of Fencing, contact the Membership Secretary. If you wish to become qualified, by taking one of our examinations, contact the Course Officer. For more information, contact the Secretary.



## The British Academy of Fencing

**“Run by coaches for coaches”**

For contact by mail or phone, contact  
*Jackie Redikin, Secretary, British Academy of Fencing,*  
*secretary@baf-fencing.com*