



Guidance Note Track & Field Competition (March 2025)

At Macclesfield Harriers & Athletics Club (MH&AC), we encourage all our members to take part in one of the many Track and Field (T&F) competitions that are available throughout the summer and winter season. The T&F discipline offers a broad range of events for all ages and fitness levels. Even if you are used to running on the road or doing Parkrun on a Saturday morning, many newcomers find the exhilaration of running on a fast, springy track, with people cheering you on, extremely rewarding. When the sun shines, the friendly family atmosphere at our summer matches is hard to beat!

Many athletes who are new to the club (including their parents and guardians) often don't know how to take their first steps into competing or find the language we use confusing. This note intends to cut through this 'treacle layer' and explain each of the different options open to you.

Please note that you must be registered with England Athletics to take part in T&F competitions. You will be asked when you join or when you renew your membership fees in April whether you want to be a 'competitive' or 'social' member of the club. If you choose to be a competitive member, you will be registered by default and will receive a unique reference number or URN for each athlete. **Make a note of your URN and keep it in a safe place as it is important.**

Types of Competition

There are essentially three different types of competition in Track & Field.

- League Competitions
- Open Meetings
- Open Championships

Each of these is covered in more detail below.



1. League Competitions

Leagues in Track and Field are like those in other sports like football or netball. We take part in two different T&F leagues:

- Youth Development League (YDL) for lower age groups, i.e. U13s & U15s
- Northern League for U17s, U20s and Seniors (i.e. anyone over 20)

NB: U11s aren't allowed to compete in either of these leagues, however they can compete in the Cheshire County T&F Championships and the Cheshire T&F Grand Prix series. More details are provided later in this note.

Each league is split into different divisions, for each region in England. Clubs can be promoted or relegated at the end of the season, depending on how well they perform in the season. Every season, there are usually 4 matches in each league, with each club 'hosting' a match on their home track and the other clubs in the same division taking part. In each match, athletes are awarded points for their club depending on what position they finish in their race or field event. The club that wins the most points in the match gets the most league points and will move up the table in their division.

The clubs that do well in the league enter lots of athletes for each match and their athletes do as many events as possible. One of our primary objectives for the coming season is to fill as many events as possible in the leagues with willing athletes. *NB: Please make sure you train for technical events like high jump and triple jump before putting your name down.*

Each age group (U13, U15, U17, etc.) at our club has a Team Manager. They are responsible for registering the team with the match organizers, depending on which athletes have said they want to take part in a particular match and what their strengths are. Don't worry if you can't take part in every league match in the season; everyone has other commitments and taking part in one match is better than none!

One of the great things about league competitions from the parent's perspective is that they are completely free to enter, as the club pays for athlete entry fees.

The best way for athletes to think about league competitions is that they are competing for their club, aiming to get as many points as possible by entering as many events as they are capable of doing, so the club can get promoted at the end of the season.

2. Open Meetings

Open Meetings in Track and Field are 'one off' competitions that are open to any athlete (as long as they satisfy the entry criteria specified by the organizers). Athletes must be registered with England Athletics before entering an open meeting. Most open meetings have a varied list of events for all age groups, from U11 to Seniors, although the options might be fairly limited for U11s. Some open events are specifically focused on throws, jumps, hurdles or combined events (pentathlon, heptathlon or decathlon).

Unlike League matches, opens are **not free** to enter. Typical entry fees are £6 for your first event and £4 for each additional event. Entries are usually made via the website of the host club or sometimes on a web portal called Roster Athletics.

More experienced athletes often travel to other clubs, sometimes to different regions of the UK to compete in their chosen event, choosing a date that suits their plan for the season. For athletes who are new to competition, there are many open meetings available in our local area, usually in early spring or early autumn (outdoor) or over the winter (indoor).

Below are some of the local and regional clubs that arrange open meetings:

- Trafford Athletics Club (www.traffordac.co.uk)
- Warrington Athletics Club (www.warringtonac.co.uk)
- Sale Harriers (www.saleharriersmanchester.com) (winter indoor series)
- West Cheshire Athletics Club (Ellesmere Port) (www.meets.rosterathletics.com)
- Leigh Harriers (www.leighharriers.org)
- Northern Athletics Indoor Opens (Sheffield EIS) (www.northernathletics.co.uk/events/)

There is a good search tool for UK open meetings on www.openmeetings.co.uk

This year (2025), for the first time, we are launching a series of open meetings called the **Cheshire Track & Field Grand Prix (CTFGP)**. This has replaced last season's Cheshire Track & Field League, which was disbanded as it was making a financial loss for host clubs. The CTFGP is a series of four summer open meetings hosted by Cheshire clubs. Athletes from all age groups (U11 to Senior) can enter multiple events in each meeting and earn grand prix points based on their place in each event (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.). The athlete with the most points at the end of the season for their age group and gender (U13 Boys, U13 Girls, etc.) will win a prize.

Whilst the CTFGP is open to all athletes across the UK, there will be a 7-day '**priority window**' for each meeting, which will open 5-6 weeks before each meeting. During the window, athletes from Cheshire clubs (including Macclesfield) will be able to register for their chosen

events. Each event will have a capacity, e.g. 24 places for U13 Boys 100m. A maximum of 3 entries for each event from each club will be allowed **during the priority window**, e.g. only 3 places from Macclesfield for U13 Boys 100m. After the priority window has closed, anyone can register for the remaining places, allowing more Macclesfield athletes to enter their chosen event, e.g. we could end up with 5 people doing the U13 Boys 100m. We will let you know when the priority windows open, so make sure you keep checking the Spond App for updates.

The best way for athletes to think about open meetings is that they are competing for themselves, aiming to improve their 'personal best' time, distances or height in their chosen event(s). For older athletes, they might also be aiming to achieve the qualifying level for national finals such as the English Schools Championships.

3. Open Championships

Open Championships are similar to open meetings. However, they take place only once in the season and the order of events may spread over two days. The most well-known in our region is the Cheshire County Track and Field Championships in May. Entries are open in March and can be made via the Roster Athletics website (www.meets.rosterathletics.com).

Below is a list of some of the Championships available to athletes from Cheshire clubs, some of which are by 'invitation only' as they are at regional or national level. Athletes who do well in Championships could be selected to represent the county in their chosen event(s). (Please ask us for further details if you are interested in finding out how to enter these):

- Northern U17, U20 & Senior Indoor Championships
- Northern U13 & U15 Indoor Championships
- Judith Temperton Northern Inter County Championship (U15 & U17 only)
- Northern U13, U15 & U17 Outdoor Championships
- Northern U20 & Senior Outdoor Championships

MH&AC also awards club prizes at the annual awards dinner in March to those athletes that have competed in the most league events, championships and CTFGP meetings and have also performed well throughout the season. Further details of the awards are on our website.

If your school is interested in athletics, it is also worth asking them about the following events organized by English Schools Athletics Association (www.esaa.org.uk):

- English Schools Track & Field Cup
- English Schools Track & Field Championships
- English Schools Combined Events Regional Finals and Championships