

## Ranks and the Scholar Series

**Novice** – each year, informal competitions are held in each club. At these competitions, new students have the opportunity then to earn this certificate. This exposure to fencing competition will give them an idea of what it is like to experience of the “duel”. Honour is just as much on the line here, as was one’s life at the point of a rapier!

The job of the novice is to get to grips with the mechanics and basic rules of the sport; to answer the question “what is the point of the sport, and what do I have to do to win?”

**Scholar** – During these club competitions, the student has to demonstrate that he or she has mastered this fundamental task. It usually takes between 6 and 12 months to receive the rank of scholar, after which students may participate in the “Scholar Challenges” held on Saturday afternoons. Their job is to get familiar with the competition environment in which one has to develop self-sufficiency and the mindset required to be successful in fencing.

**Free-Scholar** – The best scholar at each of these Challenges wins promotion to this rank. These students now settle into a rank which is the “core business” of the school, namely developing physical, technical and tactical skills which will enable them to grow as fencers. The task here is to develop a range of actions, as well as the ability to execute these with precision firstly in the “safe” training situation, and then in a competitive environment. This takes a lot of practice, and it can take quite a while to earn promotion. Free-Scholars qualify for the En Garde ranking tournament held towards the end of each term.

**Provosts** form the base of our team that competes at representative events. The third Scholar Series event of the third term is a “final” and serves as trials to see who is up to the challenge! Where scholars can get promoted based on their ranking points as well the result of the challenge, usually only the best free-scholar earns promotion each term. The object of training at this level is first to be able to cope with the pressure of competition, and then to thrive in these situations! Provosts are invited to the squad who form the training group from which the team to represent En Garde at provincial events is selected.

A **Master** is the pinnacle of the rank structure! The best provost at each term’s Prize challenge earns a seniority band. Three maroon bands earns promotion to master, so it takes at least a year of being the number one provost. Masters do not participate in the scholar challenges, only the finals.