

The GCSF Belt System

For All Combat Sports, One Federation

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

Global Combat Sports Federation • Kickboxing • Muay Thai • Japanese Jiu Jitsu • Savate • MMA
globalcombatsportsfederation.com

For the first time, kickboxing, Muay Thai and MMA have one professional grading system that is tied directly to how you actually compete. The GCSF belt system maps every grade onto an internationally recognised competition ladder from novice through advanced levels, so your belt is not a decoration: it tells you exactly when, and against whom, you are ready to fight. This guide explains the ladder, what each exam involves, what it costs, and how to register.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Your GCSF belt is an honest signal of competitive readiness: it sets the threshold for stepping into the ring and keeps every fighter matched to their true level.

Who We Are

A worldwide federation built by Dutch fighting know-how

The Global Combat Sports Federation (GCSF) is a worldwide governing body that unites Kickboxing, Muay Thai, Japanese Jiu Jitsu, Savate and MMA under one framework: one federation, many disciplines, no borders. GCSF is led by people who helped build modern European combat sport.

LEADERSHIP

Thom Harinck

President

A Dutch kickboxing and Muay Thai pioneer, founder of Chakuriki Gym Amsterdam (1978). Trainer of world-level fighters including Branko Cikatic, Peter Aerts, Badr Hari, Lucia Rijker and Andy Souwer. More than 50 years at the heart of the sport.

Johan Vos

Vice-President

A prominent Dutch kickboxing instructor and grading authority, central to technical development and standardisation, with decades of gym ownership and coaching experience.

Rion G. O. Rijker

Secretary

Responsible for federation administration, the Dan Registry and member services.

Together, Harinck and Vos carry the authentic Dutch-style kickboxing heritage that emerged in the 1970s and 80s, now formalised inside a modern, competition-driven grading system.

Why a Belt System for Kickboxing?

Kickboxing, Muay Thai and MMA grew up without a formal grading structure. Status came from your fight record or your gym's name. For a sport practised by hundreds of thousands of people, most of whom train but rarely or never compete, that left real gaps:

- No **threshold** protecting beginners from stepping into competition too early.
- No structured **didactic build-up** from first lesson to ring-ready.
- No way for recreational members to **see and feel progress**.
- No **quality benchmark** for the people coaching and cornering you.

A FIRST FOR THE SPORT

GCSF is the first worldwide federation to give kickboxing, Muay Thai and MMA a formal belt system that is wired directly into an internationally recognised competition ladder from novice through advanced levels, so progression, safety and competition finally speak the same language.

The Belt-to-Class Ladder

Your belt tells you when, and at which level, you are ready to fight

This is the heart of the GCSF system for Kickboxing, Muay Thai, MMA and Savate. Each colour belt maps onto a stage in an internationally recognised competition ladder: **novice, intermediate and advanced levels**. Competition is only permitted from the orange belt onward: the single most important safety rule in the system.

BELT (KYU)	COMPETITION	COMPETITION LEVEL	PROFILE
White	Not permitted	–	Beginner, first 3–6 months.
Yellow (5th kyu)	Not permitted	–	Core technique phase, 6–12 months.
Orange (4th kyu)	Permitted from here	Novice	First bouts, 18+.
Green (3rd kyu)	Ongoing	Novice → Intermediate	After 3 novice-level wins → intermediate level.
Blue (2nd kyu)	Ongoing	Intermediate	Experienced amateur.
Brown (1st kyu)	Ongoing	Intermediate	After 6 intermediate-level wins → advanced level.
1st Dan (black)	Ongoing	Intermediate → Advanced	After 8 intermediate-level wins → advanced level.
2nd Dan (black)	Ongoing	Advanced / Pro	Fully developed competitor.

THE ORANGE-BELT THRESHOLD

GCSF policy is clear: competition is only permitted from the 4th kyu (orange belt). This guarantees a minimum technical base before anyone fights, protecting inexperienced athletes: a core safety pillar of the federation.



White • start

Starting point for every new practitioner.



5th Kyu • Yellow

First graded level: stance, footwork, fundamentals.



4th Kyu • Orange

Competition threshold: novice level becomes available.



3rd Kyu • Green

Consolidation; transition from novice toward intermediate level.



2nd Kyu • Blue

Intermediate level: advanced technique and sparring.



1st Kyu • Brown

Intermediate level: full-contact eligibility.



1st Dan • Black

Intermediate toward advanced level: minimum four years of training.



2nd Dan • Black

Advanced level / Pro; receives the official embroidered black belt.

Japanese Jiu Jitsu: A Separate Track

Its own technical ladder, no competition classes

Japanese Jiu Jitsu sits apart from the striking disciplines. It does **not** map onto the competition ladder used for striking disciplines. Instead it follows its own technical ladder, built around self-defence, partner work and technical mastery. Belts here confirm **technical level**, not competitive experience.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- The same colour belts mark progression, but they certify control and technique rather than ring readiness.
- Grading focuses on defensive and takeover techniques, partner safety and clean execution.
- No reference to competition levels: Japanese Jiu Jitsu has its own assessment framework.

Youth (Junior Programme) vs Adults

YOUTH: JUNIOR PROGRAMME (UNDER 18)

- Own kyu progression up to brown belt (same colours).
- **Never a black belt under 18.**
- No techniques to the head (in line with international youth-safety standards).
- No low kicks under 14; no knee techniques under 12.
- Headguard, shin guards and mouthguard mandatory.
- Own youth bouts under the junior programme regulations.

ADULTS (18+)

- Full kyu and Dan progression.
- Competition from orange belt (novice level) upward.
- 1st Dan after a minimum of four years of training.
- A youth turning 18 is re-evaluated on a probationary basis before entering the adult system.

WHY THIS PROTECTS YOUNG ATHLETES

Capping juniors at brown belt and barring head contact under 18 keeps progression honest and physically safe. Young fighters build their base before contact intensity increases with age and grade.

Dan Examinations

What to expect, and when

Central Dan examinations are held **twice a year**, around April and October, at the standard venue in Amsterdam. Every panel is made up of at least three Dan-grade holders and chaired by a board member.

WHAT EVERY GRADING EXAMINES

From colour belts to Dan, exams combine practical and theoretical work: punches (jab, cross, hook, uppercut), kicks (low, middle, high, built up by grade), knee techniques (from green belt for competitors), free combinations, **defensive and counter techniques**, pad work with an instructor, bag work for power and cardio, shadow boxing, and level-appropriate **sparring** with controlled contact. Theory covers the relevant part of the competition rules for each level, injury prevention and anti-doping awareness. Throughout, the four core values must be visible: **mentality, discipline, respect and appreciation**.

GRADE	WHAT IS EXAMINED
1st Dan	6 prescribed techniques · 6 rehearsed takeover (overname) techniques from the 1st-kyu programme · conditioning test (minimum 3 sparring rounds) · theory (national federation regulations, sports-medical, GCSF code) · four core values. Minimum age 18, minimum 4 years of training.
2nd Dan	10 prescribed techniques · 8 rehearsed takeover techniques from realistic self-defence situations · sparring across two rounds (may combine disciplines) · a short teaching demonstration (~10 min) · theory (coaching role, sports safety, youth pedagogy).

2ND DAN: THE EIGHT TAKEOVER TECHNIQUES

Drawn from realistic self-defence situations; in each, the attack is neutralised, control is kept, and you finish in open space in a fighting stance:

1. Balance disruption (push from front / back / side; Uke falls under control).
2. Frontal body grab.
3. Rear body grab.
4. Side body grab.
5. Frontal two-handed neck grab / clinch.
6. Rear two-handed neck grab.
7. Side two-handed neck grab.
8. Combined-situation takeover, applying the timing principles taught at this level.

Every successful exam includes your belt, certificate and registration in the GCSF Dan Registry: a verifiable, internationally recognised record of your rank. 3rd Dan and above are awarded on merit by the GCSF board.

The Official Embroidered Black Belt

From 2nd Dan onward

From **2nd Dan** you receive an **official embroidered black belt** bearing the GCSF emblem, your name and your Dan grade. It is the international mark of GCSF instructor level.

THE CEREMONIAL BELT IS FOR

- Promotion ceremonies
- Official GCSF events
- Teaching your own students on formal occasions
- Cornering athletes at competition

NOT FOR DAILY TRAINING

For everyday sessions you wear an ordinary training belt. Reserving the embroidered belt for the occasions above keeps it a genuine mark of standing.

The Path to Trainer: Instructor Diploma

From **2nd Dan** (or a demonstrably equivalent technical level) with at least five years of coaching experience, you can train for the GCSF Instructor Diploma, set at the level of an internationally recognised instructor certification (Trainer-Coach Level 3) and recognised at EQF Level 3 equivalent through the federation's partnerships with recognised national federations.

THREE PROOFS OF COMPETENCE

1. Preparing and delivering training.
2. Guiding the athlete and the group.
3. Competition and sparring coaching.

ALSO REQUIRED

- VOG (certificate of good conduct)
- First-aid / AED diploma
- Signed GCSF code of conduct

CORNERING AUTHORITY

With the diploma you may corner at **novice and intermediate-level** bouts for your own athletes. **Advanced-level** cornering requires 2nd Dan plus the diploma. Diploma holders may run kyu examinations and award all colour belts (not Dan grades), and teach youth provided their background check is current.

Central Trainings & Where We Operate

Two mandatory events a year, recognised worldwide

Central Trainings: twice a year

GCSF holds **two central trainings each year** at the fixed Amsterdam venue, announced at least three months in advance and mandatory for all Dan-grade holders:

- **Spring central training:** technical updates and rules refresher.
- **Autumn central training:** didactics, sports safety and preparation for the annual Dan examinations.

Alongside these, the **Dan examinations run twice a year** (around April and October). For instructors, central trainings count toward continuing education (minimum 20 points per year; one central training equals 8 points). Missing them leads to a formal warning and, ultimately, licence suspension.

The Belt System Makes Competition Safer

Tying belts to the international competition ladder is not just structure: it directly raises safety in five concrete ways:

1. **Orange-belt threshold:** no one competes without a minimum technical base.
2. **Match-making on belt + experience level + weight:** fairer pairings, fewer mismatches.
3. **Cornering by certified instructors:** professional, first-aid trained and background-checked corners.
4. **Level-bound rules:** round length and permitted techniques scale with the level (see below).
5. **Phased contact:** knee techniques to the head are advanced/intermediate level only; under 18, no head contact at all (aligned with international best practice).

LEVEL	FORMAT	CONTACT
Junior (youth)	3 × 1 min	No head contact.
Novice	3 × 1.5 min	No knee to the head.
Intermediate	3 × 2 min	Limited techniques.
Intermediate (advanced)	3 × 3 min	Full contact permitted.
Advanced	3–5 × 3 min	All techniques (title bouts).

GCSF Worldwide

GCSF operates worldwide, building partnerships with recognised national federations in each country. These partnerships provide the instructor accreditation behind the Instructor Diploma and formal recognition, so your grade and instructor status travel with you.

Factsheet

Prices, planning and how to register

Examination Prices

Every fee includes your belt, certificate and registration in the GCSF Dan Registry.

EXAMINATION	TOTAL
Colour belt: youth (5th / 4th / 3rd kyu)	€30
Colour belt: youth (2nd / 1st kyu)	€40
Colour belt: adults (5th / 4th / 3rd kyu)	€40
Colour belt: adults (2nd / 1st kyu)	€55
1st Dan (Black Belt)	€175
2nd Dan (incl. ceremonial belt)	€250
3rd Dan	€300
Instructor Diploma (internationally recognised instructor certification)	€450

HOW GCSF COMPARES

GCSF examination fees are in line with other major international federations. GCSF adds clear extra value: internationally recognised instructor certification through national federation partnerships, the embroidered ceremonial black belt from 2nd Dan, entry in the central Dan Registry, and a revenue share for affiliated gyms.

2×

DAN EXAMS PER YEAR (APR & OCT)

2×

CENTRAL TRAININGS PER YEAR

4 yrs

MINIMUM TRAINING TO 1ST DAN

How to Register

- 1 Train at a GCSF-affiliated gym and reach the required time-in-grade for your next belt.
- 2 Your instructor enters you for a kyu examination, or registers you for the central Dan examination (spring or autumn).
- 3 Pass your exam before the panel; your belt and certificate are issued.
- 4 Your rank is recorded in the GCSF Dan Registry: verifiable worldwide.

