

FOOTBALL: SPORT SPECIFIC RULES 2021-22

These sport specific rules are additional to the general rules which apply to all sports.

1. ELIGIBILITY OF INSTITUTIONS

FB 1.1

English institutions competing in AoC Sport football competitions must be affiliated with their County FA prior to the commencement of the season to enable leagues to be sanctioned by the FA. Affiliation numbers must be submitted to AoC Sport at least 14 days before the start of the playing season. Teams will not be permitted to play until they can provide evidence of their affiliation.

FB 1.2

Welsh institutions must be affiliated with their area association prior to the commencement of the season to enable the Welsh league to be sanctioned by FAW. Affiliation numbers must be submitted to AoC Sport at least 14 days before the start of the playing season. Teams will not be permitted to play until they can provide evidence of their affiliation.

FB 1.3

Welsh institutions will be permitted to play in other regional leagues as long as they have affiliated with their area association.

NB: Although teams should be affiliated as open age, many of the players are under the age of 18, so it is strongly recommended that at least one member of staff has attended an FA Safeguarding workshop.

2. ELIGIBILITY OF STUDENTS

FB 2.1

A player that is registered with The FA on either a template Premier League, EFL (English Football League) or FA standard contract form is considered to be a professional and under written contract. The FA holds records on every player under written contract and a player is not considered to be under written contract until received and processed by The FA to the satisfaction of the relevant rules and regulations of the governing bodies concerned.'

FB 2.2

Any student who is contracted to a team at any level of the football pyramid is not permitted to play in AoC Sport competitions.

FB2.3

We are advised by the FA that International Clearance is required for both adult players (18 and over) and minor players (under the age of 18).

FB2.4

For all adult players, an application form (available from the FA website) must be completed and submitted to the FA International Office.

FB2.5

Players under the age of 18 fall into several categories: -

- **Article 19.2(a)** Player's parents moving to England for non-footballing reasons
- **Article 19.2(c)** Player's residence is within 50km of national border of Club with which they wish to register and Club is within 50km of national border of country where player resides
- **Article 19 par. 3 and 4** Player is **registering for the first time** and has lived in England continuously for the last five years prior to the request
- **Exchange students** - this is for students who have come to England to participate in an academic programme, and the player must have a return date back to his previous Association and country
- **Refugee / Asylum Seeker** - any player who has entered the UK (specifically England) as either a refugee or asylum seeker, regardless of whether they are an adult or minor, this process must be submitted to FIFA for them to review and decide on.

All enquiries relating to international clearance must be directed to the FA.

Further information on the process can be found at

<https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/policies/player-registration/international-clearance>

4. ADMINISTRATION OF LEAGUE COMPETITIONS

FB 4.1

Teams wishing to enter the Premier League must complete a separate application process, details of which will be circulated to all institutions in March.

FB 4.2

Decisions on applications to enter the ECFA Premier League will be made by the ECFA Committee and will be based on the following criteria: -

- Teams must meet the eligibility criteria set out in rule 1
- Teams must be able to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of playing in a premier competition as detailed in the rules, with particular reference to the quality of playing surface and facilities, the availability of match officials and high standards of administration
- Teams must be available for a short online interview should further evidence be required to confirm a team's suitability to compete in the Premier League
- Teams must have completed all their fixtures in the previous season unless there are extenuating circumstances
- Any team that withdraws from the competition once the qualifiers for the play-off competition have been decided will not be permitted to enter the following season
- Existing teams must have performed competitively in the previous season
- New applicants must be able to demonstrate an ECFA Premier League playing performance

FB 4.3

Due to calendar restraints, no more than eight teams will be permitted to compete in any division of the Premier League.

FB 4.4

Reasons will be provided for any unsuccessful applicants, who will have 5 working days to submit an appeal.

FB 4.5

In the event of any division having less than 8 teams or a team withdrawing after the divisions have been created, AoC Sport reserves the right to approach institutions that have demonstrated they meet the requirements to compete in the Premier League.

FB 4.6

An ECFA Committee (Chairman, 6 senior college staff, up to 3 AoC Sport staff and up to 2 representatives from the FA) will meet at least 3 times a year to review the football competition structure, develop a football strategy and select the teams to play in the Premier Leagues. They may also be called upon to be part of the disciplinary committee.

FB 4.7

Subject to agreement at the Regional Operations Group meeting, the women's regional leagues can be played under flexible format rules.

FB 4.8

Where this is the case, the number of players in each team may not be less than seven.

FB 4.9

In all AoC Sport football competitions teams may nominate five substitutes who may be used at any time. Any number of substitutions may be used at any time with the permission of the Referee. Entry onto the field of play will only be allowed during a stoppage in play. A player who has been replaced may return to the play as a substitute for another player.

FB 4.10

The number of players and substitutes for flexible format matches must be agreed during the match confirmation process.

FB 4.11

In flexible format matches, the type of playing surface, size of the field of play and duration of the match can be determined by the two teams.

6. ADMINISTRATION OF CUP COMPETITIONS

FB 6.1

College men's teams entering the Premier League or Championships can only enter the ECFA Men's Premier Cup. Other college teams can opt to enter the Premier Cup.

FB 6.2

Women's teams entering the Premier League can only enter the ECFA Women's Premier Cup. Other college teams can opt to enter the Premier Cup.

FB 6.3

Only college men's teams who do not play in the Premier League or Championships can enter the ECFA Men's Knockout Cup.

FB 6.4

Only women's teams who do not play in the Premier League can enter the ECFA Women's Knockout Cup.

FB 6.5

Only non-college men's teams can enter the ECFA Knockout Trophy.

FB 6.6

Teams playing in the men's Premier league will be given a bye into the third round of the ECFA Premier Cup or ECFA Knockout Trophy.

FB 6.7

All cup matches that finish in a draw at full-time will be concluded by any one or all the following procedures depending upon the prevailing conditions:

- Extra time of two halves of 15 minutes.
- A penalty kick competition carried out in accordance with the Laws of the Game.
- This should be agreed by both managers in the presence of the Referee prior to the commencement of the match.

8. FIXTURE CONFIRMATION AND CONDITIONS OF PLAY

FB 8.1

All matches should be played on well-maintained grass or 3G pitches and all lines should be clearly marked. The minimum dimensions of the field of play is as follows: -

- Premier League, Premier Cup and Championships: 65m x 92m
- Regional Leagues, Knockout Cups and Knockout Trophy: 45m x 90m.

FB 8.2

All grass and 3G pitches must have at least 1.83metres between the touchline/goal line and the perimeter.

NB Although not compulsory, the use of spectator barriers as suggested in the FA's Respect Spectator Guidelines is recommended.

FB 8.3

A Technical Area to be marked out in accordance with the guidance contained in the 'Laws of the Game' booklet.

FB 8.4

Although grass is still the preferred option, a 3G surface is acceptable, providing it is on the FA register of approved pitches.

FB 8.5

Where an approved 3G pitch is used, the opponent must be informed seven days before the match, unless it is a substitute pitch that is being used due to poor weather making a grass pitch unfit for play.

FB 8.6

Under no circumstances can any match be played on a sand-based or sand-filled artificial surface.

FB 8.7

In the Premier League and Championships, separate, secure and well-maintained dressing rooms must be provided for both teams, which must include a shower area. Toilets and wash hand basins can be in a separate area.

FB 8.8

In the regional leagues, separate dressing rooms must be provided, though it is acceptable to provide shared toilet and shower facilities.

FB 8.9

Duration – all matches will be played in accordance with the FA rules of the game and shall be for a maximum of 90 minutes (i.e. 45 mins each way) and a minimum of 70 minutes (i.e. 35 mins each way) by agreement with both Team Managers and the Match Referee. There should be a half time interval not exceeding 15 minutes.

FB 8.10

Temporary dismissals will be used in all competitions whereby a player who is cautioned for dissent will be sent to the 'sin bin' for 10 minutes.

FB 8.11

In football no team or player is permitted to wear black kit.

10. PLAYER REGISTRATION AND TEAM SHEETS

FB 10.1

All players must be registered on FA Whole Game System (WGS) before they are eligible to play for which they must have a FAN number. The name, date of birth and address of each player can be used to search WGS for existing FAN numbers or to create them for players that have not already created one.

FB 10.2

Premier League: A maximum of 25 players at any one time may be registered. No new players may be registered to play after February Half Term unless written permission is obtained from AoC Sport.

FB 10.3

A minimum of 16 players for each 11-a-side team and 10 players for a 7-a-side team must be registered in accordance with rule 10.

FB 10.4

In accordance with FA rules it is permissible for players who are registered to teams in other midweek leagues to also be registered and play for teams in AoC Sport leagues.

11. MATCH OFFICIALS

FB 11.1

Premier League and Premier Cup: neutral referee at **Level 7** or above and **two qualified assistant referees at Level 7 or above.**

FB 11.2

Championships: neutral, qualified referee at **Level 7** or above, plus **two qualified assistant referees at level 7 or above**. These may be students who are qualified, registered with a County FA and who wear proper referee's attire.

FB 11.3

Regional Leagues: neutral, qualified referee at Level 7 or above or, where both teams are in agreement at the time of the match confirmation, this may be a qualified member of staff from either team.

NB: We are aware of the difficulty in accessing qualified referees on a Wednesday afternoon and encourage the use of qualified students wherever possible. At regional level in particular, lack of availability of referees should not be a reason for cancelling a match.

FB 11.4

Knockout Cups and Men's Knockout Trophy: A Referee at Level 7 or above must be provided for all matches, but from the quarter final a Referee at Level 7 and two qualified Assistant Referees must be provided. Assistant Referees may be qualified students who are registered with a County FA, are dressed appropriately and who are not on the team sheet as players.

FB 11.5

Match officials should have access to their own separate, secure and well maintained (and separate for male & female) changing facilities and shower.