

## FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION REGULATIONS

### GENERAL

Participants should be aware that any of the Football Association Regulations may be amended during the season following publication of The FA Handbook. Reference should be made to The FA's website, located at [www.TheFA.com](http://www.TheFA.com), for updated versions of the Regulations.

## REGULATIONS FOR THE SANCTION AND CONTROL OF COMPETITIONS AT STEP 1 OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM AND BELOW

### Preamble

Competitions receive sanction from The FA or County FAs to demonstrate that each Competition comprises clubs that are affiliated to a County FA; that each set of rules complies with FA requirements and that the Competitions may benefit from the use of registered match officials, may play against other affiliated clubs and benefit from other services offered by The FA and County FAs. All Affiliated Associations sanctioning Competitions and all Competitions shall observe the Rules and Regulations of The FA. Any rule, regulation or practice of any such Association or Competition that is inconsistent with the Rules and Regulations of The FA shall be void and unenforceable. For further avoidance of doubt, the fact that a Competition has been sanctioned whether directly or indirectly by The FA shall not render enforceable any such rule, regulation or practice that would otherwise be void and unenforceable under the Rules of The FA.

In order to receive sanction from The FA or an Affiliated Association, a Competition must have its Rules approved by the sanctioning Association and provide a list of its member clubs and teams, all of which must be affiliated to an Affiliated Association for the appropriate season.

Applications to form new Competitions should be directed to the Affiliated Association which has the majority of clubs expected to participate. The application must state whether the Competition comprises new clubs/teams or whether it proposes to invite clubs/teams from existing Competitions. Applications to form a new Competition involving clubs/teams from existing Competitions must allow time for the sanctioning Association to consult with the existing Competitions and relevant Associations in order to assess the impact of the new Competition before deciding whether to approve or reject the application.

1. A Competition consisting of clubs, all of which are Members of one Affiliated Association only, shall make application for sanction to, and the Competition shall be sanctioned by, and be under the jurisdiction of that Association.
2. Competitions at Steps 1 to 6 of the National League System and competitions in the top five tiers of the Women's Pyramid shall make application for sanction to The FA. Other competitions consisting of clubs within the area of, or affiliated to, two or more Affiliated Associations shall make application for sanction to, and may be affiliated with, the Association which has the majority of the Competition's clubs in membership. In the case of any dispute as to the correct sanctioning Association, this will be determined by The FA Sanction and Registrations Committee. In its absolute discretion, The FA may vary the provisions of this Regulation as it sees fit.
3. Licensing System
  - (a) The FA shall operate a Licensing system to apply to all Clubs in Competitions at Steps 1 to 4 of the National League System ("NLS"). A Club shall be required to hold a Licence to be a member of a Competition at Steps 1 to 4 of the NLS with effect from the commencement of the 2016-2017 Playing Season. The Licensing System to be applied is included as Appendix 1.
  - (b) Each Competition at Steps 1 to 4 of the NLS shall be responsible for the operation, assessment and granting of the Licence in respect of its Clubs through the Standardised Rules as approved by the Sanctions & Registrations Committee of The FA. A Competition at Steps 1 to 4 shall take all reasonable and practical steps to co-operate with The FA in the application of the Licence.
  - (c) In the event that a Competition fails to apply the licensing requirements set out in the Standardised Rules to the satisfaction of The FA, then The FA shall have the powers of the Board of that Competition as set out in the Standardised Rules to

apply such licensing requirements. In addition, The FA may, if necessary, bring an action against the Competition for Misconduct under the Rules of The FA.

National League System Policy Body

- (d) A body shall be established by the Sanctions & Registrations Committee to oversee the Licensing system ('the NLS Licensing Policy Body' ('Policy Body')). The Policy Body shall be responsible for reporting to the Sanctions & Registrations Committee on all matters in relation to the formation, development and monitoring of the licensing system.
- (e) The Policy Body shall comprise the following:
- Four Council members, one to be nominated annually by each of the Competitions at Steps 1-4 as its representative;
  - Three Council members who are National Game Representatives and who shall be nominated annually by the Sanctions & Registrations Committee;
  - A Chairman who has no affiliation to any League in the National League System and who shall be nominated annually by the Sanctions & Registrations Committee.
- (f) Questions arising at any meeting of the Policy Body shall be decided by a majority of votes. The Chairman shall only be eligible to vote in the event of a tie.
4. A Competition may be used for advertising and/or sponsorship purposes and the name of the donor of a Trophy or any other presentation may form part of the title of a Competition only with the prior consent of The FA or appropriate Affiliated Association. The title sponsor of a Competition may be changed from season to season.
5. If a Competition is discontinued for any reason a Trophy or any other presentation shall be returned to the donor if the conditions attached to it so provide or, if not, dealt with in accordance with the Competition rule governing the dissolution of the Competition as set out in The FA's Standard Codes of Rules and approved by the sanctioning Association.
6. The sanctioning Association (s) may not allot a club/team to a Competition. The sanctioning Association may permit the Competition to make provision in its Rules to restrict the number of Competitions, except FA and County Cup Competitions, in which its teams take part. An exception to the Regulation shall be in Competitions that form part of the National League System and the Women's Football Pyramid and Girls' Football, as determined from time to time by the Association. In accordance with FIFA Statutes, Clubs applying to play in a Competition under the jurisdiction of another National Association must have the permission of their County FA, The FA, other National Association, UEFA and FIFA.
7. In accordance with FA Rule C2, Players without a written contract are not restricted as to the clubs for which they may register and play provided they comply with the Rules and Regulations of any Competition in which their club(s) may be engaged.
8. Application for sanction of a Competition must be made in a timely fashion. Following approval of the Rules by the sanctioning Association, Competitions shall complete and submit FA Form "D" giving a full list of clubs participating in the Competition for the relevant season. All participating clubs must be correctly affiliated to an Affiliated Association before the Competition starts the season.

#### **All Competitions**

- i. Applications for sanction must receive approval from the Competition's sanctioning Association for:
- ii. The rules of the Competition and related Competitions (e.g. League plus League Cups); and

- iii. All Member clubs being correctly affiliated to an Affiliated Association; and
- iv. The terms and conditions of any offer of sponsorship, which must include details of the offer made and the proposed distribution/use of sponsorship monies.
- v. The proposed Rules of the Competition must be submitted to the sanctioning Association at least 28 days prior to the date set for the Competition's AGM or SGM. The request for approval must clearly set out the proposed departures from the Standard Code of Rules, highlighting any alterations.
- vi. Late submissions may result in the Rules not being approved in time to be considered at the General Meeting.
- vii. For Competitions sanctioned for the previous season only changes to the Rules of the previous season need be submitted. Such changes to the Rules of the previous season must be set out clearly alongside the existing rule with an explanation for the proposed change and state whether the change has been proposed by clubs, the Board or Management Committee or is a mandatory change required by The FA or sanctioning Association.
- viii. Proposed rules that do not comply with the mandatory elements of the Standard Code of Rules published by The FA from time to time will need to be amended to satisfy the requirements of the sanctioning Association before being put before the Competition's General Meeting. Any proposed rule that runs contrary to FA policies shall also be amended or withdrawn before being considered by the Competition's AGM or SGM.
- ix. A Competition is not allowed to alter its Constitution, Rules or clubs without the consent of The FA or the Affiliated Association(s) sanctioning the Competition.
- x. Rule changes may not be made after they have been approved by the sanctioning Association(s) giving consent to the Competition, unless such intended alteration has first been submitted to, and approved by, that Association, and subsequently by a General Meeting of the Competition.
- xi. Competitions shall submit a complete list of all member clubs prior to each season on FA Form "D" or in the manner prescribed by The FA from time to time.
- xii. Prior to the start of a Competition's season, the Competition shall ensure that all participating teams are correctly affiliated and shall make available to the sanctioning Association a list of all participating teams.
- xiii. Applications for sponsorship may be made at any time although sanctioning Associations will require up to 14 days to consider and approve applications.
- xiv. Sponsorship terms and conditions can only apply and refer to the Competition and its member clubs. The terms of sponsorship must not impose any requirement on clubs which refers to their participation in other unrelated Competitions.
- xv. When required to do so by the sanctioning Association, Competitions shall provide a copy of the minutes of their AGM and a copy of the Annual Report, Balance Sheet and Statement of Accounts.
- xvi. Competitions shall not allow matches to be played until their member clubs are affiliated and Rules or Rule changes are approved by the sanctioning Association(s).
- xvii. Youth (up to and including U18) Competitions must have appointed a Youth League Welfare Officer (YLWO) before sanction may be granted.
- xviii. Separate rules must be submitted for Youth sections/Competitions.

#### **Charity Competitions/Matches**

Charity Competitions should refer to FA Rule B3 for specific guidance on staging charity matches. Sanctioning Associations will need to know whether the match / Competition involves affiliated teams or scratch teams.

9. When an application for sanction is made by a Competition the Affiliated Association(s) concerned may require that the Competition Rules provide that representation of the Association(s) be by the inclusion of non-voting member(s) of the Management Committee. This arrangement is for the guidance of the Competition to ensure compliance with Association Rules and instructions.
10. The sanctioning Association(s) may approve modifications of the Laws of the Game defined by the International FA Board in Competitions for players under the age of 16, women's football, veterans' football (over 35 years of age) and disability football.
11. If a difference of opinion arises between Affiliated Associations over the right of sanction and jurisdiction, any of the Association(s) may appeal to The FA in accordance with FA Rule H and the Regulations for FA Appeals.
12. In the event of a Competition being refused sanction or affiliation by an Affiliated Association the applicants have the right of appeal to The FA in accordance with FA Rule H and the Regulations for FA Appeals.
13. A Competition shall consist of a maximum number of member clubs as approved by the sanctioning Association. The voting rights of member clubs shall be determined by the Rules of the Competition subject to the approval of the sanctioning Association(s).
14. With the exception of any club competing in The FA Women's Super League, if a club is required to do so by its parent Affiliated Association, a club must enter a suitable Cup Competition of that Association. However, in the absence of any existing suitable County Cup Competition, women's clubs may enter a Competition jointly organised by a neighbouring Affiliated Association. Only the matches of such Competition(s) will take precedence over other Competitions in which the club competes, except The Football Association Premier League, The Football League and The Football League Cup Competition.

With the consent of its parent Affiliated Association, a club may enter suitable Cup Competition(s) of other Affiliated Association(s). Ties in The FA Youth Challenge Cup Competition will take precedence with the exception of ties in other FA Competitions and first team League fixtures.

Affiliated Association(s) Cup Competition games which involve the Reserve or Youth teams of a club do not take precedence over arranged first team League fixtures of The National League, Northern Premier, Isthmian and Southern Leagues.

15.
  - (a) A club may not withdraw or resign without penalty unless it has complied with the obligations set out in the Rules of the Competition, in so far as such Rules are consistent with the following provisions of this Regulation and the other Rules and Regulations of The FA. Competitions may, through the sanctioning Association, use the regulations of the Football Debt Recovery process to collect football debts of clubs/teams that withdraw without satisfying their obligations to the Competition.
  - (b) A Competition may require a club to give written notice of an intention or provisional intention to resign or withdraw at the end of a season. Where such notice has been submitted a club must either confirm or rescind the notice, in writing, by 31st March in that season.
  - (c) A Competition may not, in its Rules and Regulations, adopt or give effect to any Rule, Regulation or practice whereby:-
    - (i) a club intending or having a provisional intention to resign or withdraw at the end of a season is required to give notice of such intention before 31st December in that season;

- (ii) any penalty or other obligation is imposed upon a club intending to resign or withdraw at the end of a season for not having given notice of such intention prior to 31st December.
    - (iii) any club is or can be required to give notice of an intention or provisional intention to resign or withdraw before being able to apply for membership of another Competition.
  - (d) Subject to the provisions of this Regulation, a club shall be permitted to resign or withdraw from a Competition at the end of a season.
  - (e) For the avoidance of doubt and without prejudice to the generality of Regulation 19, any rule, regulation or practice in breach of this Regulation shall be void and unenforceable.
  - (f) Without at least seven days' written notice to a Competition, a Participant (FA Rule A2) may not make an approach to or have contact with a club still in membership of that Competition with regard to the club becoming a member of another Competition. The approaching Participant (A) may not approach the same Club a second time in the same playing season; (B) may approach only one Club within the same Competition at any time; and (C) may not approach another Club in the same Competition within 28 days of an earlier notice of approach or acknowledgment.
16. (a) A Competition must make provision in its Rules for a right of appeal to the sanctioning Association, as provided for in FA Rule B1(b). The Rules of Competitions sanctioned by The Football Association must make provision for the payment of a minimum fee of £50.
- (b) No appeal can be lodged against a decision taken at an Annual or Special General Meeting unless this is on the ground of unconstitutional conduct.
17. In Charity Competitions:-
- (a) conducted on a league principle, not less than 1/10th of the gross gate receipts of each match must go to Charity. If the receipts are insufficient to cover ground expenses of the match the percentage may not be taken. Expenses must not include those of the competing clubs;
  - (b) conducted as a knock-out cup, of the gross gate receipts at least 1/10th of the Preliminary Round(s) and at least 1/3rd of the Semi-Final and Final Ties must go to charity;
  - (c) a salary or honorarium must not be paid to any official;
  - (d) at the close of each Competition an audited Balance Sheet or Financial Statement must be forwarded to the sanctioning Association together with confirmation from the Charity(ies) of the amount donated.
18. Competitions shall fix the fees and expenses to be paid to Match Officials officiating in their matches within the limits laid down by the sanctioning Association. Officials shall neither ask for, nor receive a larger fee than that fixed by the Competition.
19. Referees must not be called upon to perform duties extraneous to the Laws of the Game which would bring them into direct contact unnecessarily with participating players, e.g. when match report cards were being signed by players.
20. Competitions must not impose bonds on their member clubs as a guarantee of the good behaviour of their players on or around the field of play.
21. The Rules of the Competition must comply with the Standard Code of Rules issued by The Football Association and as altered from time to time for the level at which the Competition competes.