



# **GENDER PARTICIPATION POLICY**

Participation of Transgender and Non-Binary Players in  
accordance with the WRU Competition Regulations



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# INTRODUCTION

Society is changing, and sport must face the challenge of accommodating participation from every group, even if this means recognising that our traditional structures are not always set up to do so. We believe that this policy addresses those societal changes around gender and sex.

The Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) is the national governing body for rugby union in Wales, and has a responsibility to regulate participation in rugby union in a safe environment. The WRU are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion throughout rugby in Wales, and providing a jersey for all across the game.

The values of the WRU are Courage, Humour, Integrity, Excellence, Family and Success, and this is central to the development of this policy.

This is a policy for the community game in Wales, so will only be applicable to those players who participate at that level. It should be read in conjunction with the WRU Competition Regulations.

We will be responsive to emerging research and evidence and will commit to reviewing the policy on a more regular basis to ensure it is fit for purpose. We also commit to continuing to work closely with our stakeholders to support them and make informed decisions in the best interests of our sport.

The WRU are also committed to promoting clean sport, and this policy complies with the WRU and UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) Rules and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code.



# BACKGROUND

In February 2020, World Rugby as part of a review of their transgender policy, held a forum which included representatives from many different groups, including the Welsh Rugby Union. The two-day forum provided stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss and debate a range of matters relating to this subject.

The WRU then completed a series of consultation sessions, and subsequently provided feedback to World Rugby in September 2020.

World Rugby undertook three phases of review:

1. A ground-breaking workshop that brought together a cross-section of experts for the first time with the objective of understanding the medical, physiological, psychological, risk, socio-ethical and sporting environment. This included transgender community representatives, players, medical, research and rugby experts
2. A comprehensive review of the workshop outcomes and learnings to inform the development of guidelines that consider inclusivity in the context of ensuring player safety is not compromised
3. A comprehensive and inclusive process of consultation with advocacy groups, player representatives and unions

As a result of this process and based on the available evidence, it was concluded that a balance between safety, fairness and inclusion could not be provided for trans women playing women's contact rugby, at the elite level of the game, and this policy was launched in October 2020.

The WRU then embarked on developing a domestic policy and worked in consultation with other rugby union national governing bodies and partners, including Sport Wales and the Sports Council Equality Group.

There have been significant developments in this area since 2020, and the WRU have considered a variety of policy models to ensure that we remain true to our commitment to be inclusive within our game, and provide a jersey for all.

In November 2021 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) released their Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations.

When issuing this Framework, the IOC recognised that it should be within the remit of each sport and its governing body to determine how an athlete may be at a disproportionate advantage compared with their peers, taking into consideration the nature of each sport. On that basis the IOC indicated that they were not in a position to be able to issue regulations that define eligibility criteria for every sport.

Other developments include the additional but limited research that has informed practice in this area of sport, alongside the implementation of the World Rugby policy, the significant media interest regarding trans inclusion, particularly in Olympic competitions and elite sport.

In September 2021 the UK Sports Councils' Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport was published. The guidance concludes that the inclusion of transgender people into female sport cannot be balanced regarding transgender inclusion, fairness and safety in gender-affected sport where there is meaningful competition.



# CONFIDENTIALITY

All personal information provided to the WRU under this policy will be dealt with in strict confidence and will only be accessible for the sole purpose of the application of this policy. All information and data relating to a player's application will be handled in accordance with the WRU's Privacy Policy in adhering to Data Protection and GDPR principles.



# DOMESTIC POLICY FOR THE COMMUNITY GAME

The WRU acknowledge the complex nature of issues relating to transgender and gender participation, and has considered the differing opinions and concerns of a variety of stakeholders through a robust consultation process when developing this policy.

The WRU are also mindful of our legal obligations with regards to player welfare, non-discrimination and equality, so that we develop and maintain safe environments within the community game.

The WRU has considered alternatives as part of its review (including both more and less restrictive measures) but having considered such alternatives, the WRU believes that the criteria adopted by this policy are the most appropriate for the community game in Wales at this time.

This policy sets out the process to facilitate the participation of transgender and non-binary players in community rugby in Wales. This includes all formats of rugby union where there is physical contact that is not governed through modified rules. This includes games where there are limited contact or mixed ability rugby where contact is managed through the use of verbal or visual clues.

Rugby union is a collision sport and is gender affected, which means that there is a material advantage for being bigger, stronger and faster, and this manifests itself in the physical differences between males and females. Therefore we have sex categorisation within the sport to provide fairness in competition.

The policy review that has been conducted by the WRU concludes that the inclusion of transgender females in the female category cannot be balanced regarding transgender inclusion, fairness and safety in gender-affected sport where there is meaningful competition. This is due to retained differences in strength, stamina and physique between the average woman compared with the average transgender woman or non-binary person assigned male at birth, with or without testosterone suppression.

The eligibility criteria set out in this Policy apply to contact rugby only and are focussed upon providing opportunities to enable participation in rugby, as far as is possible, considering the differing aspects of safety, fairness and inclusion.

This Policy relates specifically to community rugby which is under the governance of the WRU, and would include all competitions and leagues designated as community rugby.

Therefore this policy does not cover any World Rugby related tournaments or events, or other competitions such as –

- Six Nations
- Autumn Internationals
- Olympics
- International Professional Club Competitions i.e. United Rugby Championship, European Champions Cup or European Challenge Cup

These competitions would be subject to the respective transgender policies of the relevant competition organiser or Union (as applicable)



# GENDER IN RUGBY - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The WRU are committed to inclusion with a policy intended to enable transgender players to play in the male game, with eligibility criteria applied. The WRU are also committed to ensuring that there are opportunities for those ineligible for the female category to play other formats of the game within rugby in Wales.

The eligibility criteria set out in this Policy are driven solely by the desire to enable participation in rugby, as far as is possible, in a safe and fair way. In no way are they intended as any kind of judgement on, or questioning of, the gender identity or the dignity of any Player.

## **Non-contact rugby**

WRU non-contact forms of rugby such as Tag, Touch and Walking Rugby are mixed-gender and do not have sex-based eligibility categories. Players may participate in the gender with which they identify, regardless of their sex recorded at birth.

## **Contact Rugby**

Rugby is a gender-affected sport due to the contact nature of competition where the physical strength, stamina or physique of an average person of one sex, would put them in an advantageous position or a disadvantage to an average person of the other sex.

For this reason, and as permitted in the WRU Competition Rules and Regulations, there are separate male and female eligibility categories in contact rugby in Wales from the Under 11 Age Grade upwards and in adult rugby.

See: [The Welsh Rugby Union National League Rules 2023-2024](#) →

## **Under 11 Age Grade and below**

The WRU Pathway provides that contact Age Grade Rugby at Under 11 and below is mixed sex and does not have sex-based eligibility categories. Players may participate without eligibility approval regardless of the gender with which they identify.

## **Under 11 Age Grade and above** (including adult rugby)

The WRU Pathway provides that it is necessary and justified for male and female eligibility categories to apply from the Under 11 Age Grade upwards and into the adult game. The reason for this categorisation is due to the physical and psychological changes brought about as a result of the differing development of the sexes.

## **Community Age Grade Male Game under 12-18**

To participate in this category, the player's sex recorded at birth is male, irrespective of gender identity.

If the player's sex recorded at birth is female, and the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid, the player may play if:

- their parent or guardian (or such other appropriate adult) provides their written consent, in the form prescribed by the WRU to the relevant club or school;
- an appropriate risk assessment is carried out by the club or school which the player is representing in the form approved by the WRU
- the WRU is notified prior to the player participating in the contact rugby activity.



### **Community Age Grade Female Game under 12 -18**

To participate in this category, players are permitted to play if the sex that was recorded at birth is female, and the player is not, and has never used testosterone (or related substance) supplementation.

### **Community Adult Male Game**

To participate in this category, the player's sex recorded at birth is male, irrespective of gender identity.

If the player's sex recorded at birth is female and the player identifies as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid, the player may play if:

- an appropriate risk assessment is carried out by the club or school and is recorded on the form approved by the WRU;
- they acknowledge, understand and accept the associated risks of playing contact rugby in the male category of rugby, and
- the WRU is notified prior to the player participating in the contact rugby activity

Transgender men who have not yet commenced testosterone treatment and/or commenced the gender re-assignment treatment, may continue to play in the female category of contact rugby.

However, if a transgender or non-binary player has commenced testosterone or gender re-assignment treatment, the player is no longer permitted to play in the female category of rugby

### **Community Adult Female Game**

To participate in this category, players are only permitted to play if the sex that was recorded at birth is female, and the player is not, and has never, used testosterone (or related substance) supplementation.

### **Appeal Process**

The WRU have an appeal process in place to deal with any eligibility matters that are contested in relation to this policy.

The notice of appeal shall be served on the WRU Player Welfare Co-ordinator in writing (by letter and/or email) and must be signed by the Person or Club serving the appeal (the "Appellant").

- the name of the Person or Club lodging the appeal;
- the decision appealed against;
- the date of the decision appealed against; and
- the specific grounds of the appeal.

The appeal process will ensure that the appellant is treated with respect and fairness, and that confidentiality is maintained throughout the process





## RISK ASSESSMENTS

A risk assessment must be carried in respect of all players participating in contact rugby in respect of transgender players registered female at birth wanting to participate in the male category. Factors such as physical development, technical ability and rugby competency and experience should all be taken into consideration.

See Appendix 1: Welsh Rugby Union Gender Participation Risk Assessment Form →

The WRU may undertake its own analysis and investigation into any application of this policy (including any potential breach) and may determine that a player is not eligible to or should not participate in their selected category due to reasons of competition fairness and/or safety, non-compliance with the process or such other reasons as determined by the WRU.

## OTHER PARTICIPATION IN RUGBY - JERSEY FOR ALL

The WRU are committed to growing the game in Wales and increasing participation from a playing and volunteering perspective in the community game. We would encourage people to volunteer and get involved in rugby union in Wales, and there are many options including coaching, refereeing, and other volunteer roles within rugby. There is a jersey for all including trans players, and non-binary and gender fluid players.

For more information on how to be involved in other ways, please visit:

<https://community.wru.wales/participation/how-to-get-involved/>

## THERAPEUTIC USE EXEMPTION

The Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) provides a player with authorisation to use a prohibited substance or method to treat a legitimate medical condition whilst continuing to play rugby. Players should advise their medical personnel of the requirement to comply with the WRU Anti-Doping Rules.

The WRU would need to decide on the eligibility of the transgender athlete (this includes athletes who are going through the transition process).

A request for a TUE for any eligible transgender athlete would then be considered on the merits of the application and reviewed in line with the WADA Medical Guidelines. These guidelines outline the requirements for both transgender women and men.

Players considered within the National TUE Pool are required to obtain a TUE in advance of treatment. Whereas players outside of the National TUE Pool would only need to apply for a retroactive TUE if they are drug tested. However, all players must comply with WADA regulations irrespective of TUE requirements.

If selected for Doping Control at their current level of competition, they should

- declare their medication (including testosterone, also spironolactone – so best not to limit possibilities) on their Doping Control Form
- If not already in possession of a TUE, to notify UK Anti-Doping that they wish to apply for a retroactive TUE (no later than five working days following the drug test) and then submit a completed TUE application form



## LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

In developing this policy and establishing a position on eligibility, the WRU has been mindful of the legislation in this area, including the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (EA). Under section 195(3) of the EA, contact rugby is a “gender-affected activity”. Section 195(2) of the EA states that ‘A person does not contravene section 29, 33, 34 or 35 [of the EA], so far as relating to gender reassignment, only by doing anything in relation to the participation of a transsexual person as a competitor in a gender-affected activity if it is necessary to do so to secure in relation to the activity (a) fair competition, or (b) the safety of competitors’.

## PLAYER WELFARE

The WRU are fully committed to working with other organisations to safeguard the welfare of players within the game, and work closely with World Rugby and other unions to promote player welfare. Rugby union is both a gender-affected, and collision sport, and, player welfare is a priority and a principal consideration, when promoting safe environments within our clubs, hubs and regions.

This policy has been developed based on science and legal considerations, so that the decisions made are evidence based, with player welfare the paramount consideration. The WRU have considered all current available scientific evidence relating to biological and physiological differences, and the effects of testosterone suppression on those differences.

## COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH AND REVIEW

The WRU have considered the ten guiding principles from the Sports Council Equality Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport, and developed our policy in line with this. However we are cognisant of the need to monitor any new information and research that is available that may influence decisions in the future.

The WRU will continue to engage with other key stakeholders to review this policy on a periodic basis. We previously outlined the significant developments that have taken place over the last two years and will ensure that this policy will be closely monitored and reviewed. This includes learning from further research, as well as working with World Rugby and other unions to develop inclusive formats of the game of rugby union.

World Rugby has committed to including transgender research in its annual research priorities and inviting academic institutions from around the world to submit proposals that may be funded if deemed sufficiently high quality.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is an FAQ document available here:

See [Appendix 2: Welsh Rugby Union Gender Participation Policy FAQs](#) ➔

## REPORTING CONCERNS – CONTACT DETAILS

The WRU are committed to developing a culture which is inclusive. The WRU's values of Courage, Humour, Integrity, Excellence, Family and Success are the foundations of what we do in relation to this policy, and they manifest themselves in how we behave on a daily basis.

The WRU are committed to supporting players, coaches, referees and other volunteers throughout the game in Wales to ensure that any concerns that are raised are appropriately dealt with.

The WRU have in place an Integrity Line, which has been developed to encourage participants of the game to speak up with the comfort that they will be listened to and their concerns will be handled sensitively.

If you have any concerns please contact the WRU Policy and Integrity Team on the WRU Integrity Line (Tel. No. 029 20 822 200) or Integrity Mailbox [integrity@wru.wales](mailto:integrity@wru.wales)



# **NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES FOR MEN AND WOMEN 2023/24**



**THE WELSH RUGBY UNION NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES 2023-2024**

**1. Description:**

The Competition shall be called:

- i) In respect of the Premier Division, “The Indigo Premiership;” and
- ii) In respect of the Championship East & West, Divisions 1 to 6 and Divisions 1 to 3 North East and North West, “The WRU Admiral National Leagues”.

**2. Interpretation:**

For the purposes of these National League Rules, the following terms have the meaning assigned to them:

- **ARTICLES** shall mean the Articles of Association of the Union.
- **CLUB** means a Club that is a member of the Union only and does not include Affiliated Organisations (as defined in the Articles) or any other entity which may be admitted to membership of the Union.
- **DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS** shall mean the disciplinary regulations of the Union for the time being in force
- **DISTRICT MEMBER** shall have the definition given in the Articles.
- **COMPETITIONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** means the Committee appointed by the Board of Directors of the Union in accordance with the Articles which is a Sub Committee of the Community Game Board.
- **UNION** means The Welsh Rugby Union Limited.

All other defined terms shall be interpreted in accordance with the Union’s Memorandum of Association and Articles.

**3. Form**

*The League comprises 27 Divisions, which shall be formed as follows:*

<i>Premier Division</i>	-	<i>13 Clubs</i>
<i>Championship East</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Championship West</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 East</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 East Central</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 West Central</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 West</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>

<i>Division 2 East</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 East Central</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 West Central</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 West</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 4 East</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 5 East</i>	-	<i>7 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 6 East</i>	-	<i>9 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East Central</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 4 East Central</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 5 East Central</i>	-	<i>9 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West Central</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 4 West Central</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 5 West Central</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West A</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West B</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 North</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 North</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs (to include 1 Second XV Team)</i>
<i>Division 3 North East</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs (to include 6 Second XV Teams)</i>
<i>Division 3 North West</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs (to include 8 Second XV Teams)</i>

**Note:** the table below sets out the position regarding promotion and relegation at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.

<i>Division</i>	<i>Promotion and relegation at the end of 2023-2024 Season</i>	<i>Number of Clubs in Division as of start of 2024-2025 Season</i>
Premier	<p>The League will see the top 4 teams compete in an end of season playoff format with the following games scheduled: -</p> <p>1 v 4 2 v 3</p> <p>The Final will take place at the ground of the highest seed with the winning team being declared the Champion club.</p> <p>Ten teams will be removed from the National League structure to participate in the EDC. The top five teams from Championship East and West will form the Community Premiership with the remaining three teams.</p> <p>There will be no relegation from the Indigo Premiership at the end of the 23-24 season.</p>	Up to 13 Clubs.

<p>Championship East and Championship West</p>	<p>The top five clubs in the Championship East and West respectively will be promoted into the Community Premiership at the end of the 23-24 season.</p> <p>There will be no relegation from the Championship at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to clause iii below.</p> <p>The Clubs remaining in the Championship East and West respectively at the end of the season following both promotion to the Community Premiership and promotion from Division 1 will be assigned to the appropriate Championship Division for the Season 2024-2025 based on 13 clubs participating in that Division in line with Point 4 below.</p>	<p>Up to 13 Clubs in each Division (Up to 26 Clubs however has the potential for more should the winner of Division 1 North be granted permission to join).</p>
<p>Divisions 1 East, 1 East Central, 1 West Central and 1 West</p>	<p>The Clubs finishing in first, second and third place at the end of the season in each of Divisions 1 East, 1 East Central, 1 West Central and 1 West will automatically be promoted to the Championship for the 2024-2025 season based on their geographical location.</p> <p>There will be one team relegated from Division 1 East, 1 East Central, 1 West Central and 1 West at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below.</p> <p>The Clubs remaining in Division 1 at the end of the season following both promotion to the Championship and promotion from Division 2 will be assigned to the appropriate Division 1 for the Season 2024-2025 based on 10 clubs participating in that Division in line with Point 4 below.</p>	<p>Up to 10 Clubs in each Division (up to 40 Clubs in total).</p>
<p>Divisions 2 East, 2 East Central, 2 West Central and 2 West</p>	<p>The Clubs finishing in first, second and third place at the end</p>	<p>Up to 10 Clubs in each Division (up to 40 Clubs in total).</p>

	<p>of the season in Divisions 2 East Central and 2 West Central will automatically be promoted to Divisions 1 East Central and 1 West Central respectively for the 2024-2025 season based in accordance with Clause i &amp; ii below.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place at the end of the season in each of Divisions 2 East and 2 West will automatically be promoted to Divisions 1 East and 1 West respectively for the 2024-2025 season based in accordance with Clause i &amp; ii below.</p> <p>The bottom two teams will be relegated from Division 2 East and 2 East Central to Division 3 East and Division 3 East Central respectively at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below..</p> <p>The bottom team will be relegated from Division 2 West Central to Division 3 West Central at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below</p> <p>The bottom three teams will be relegated from Division 2 West to Division 3 West at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below</p> <p>The Clubs remaining in Division 2 at the end of the season following both promotion to Division 1 and promotion from Division 3 for the Season 2024-2025 based on 10 clubs participating in that Division in line with point 4 below.</p>	
<p>Divisions 3 East, 4 East, 5 East and 6 East</p>	<p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 3 East will be promoted to Division 2 East at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 4 East will be promoted to Division 3</p>	<p>Up to 10 Clubs in each Division (Up to 40 Clubs in total).</p>



	<p>East at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 5 East will be promoted to Division 4 East at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 6 East will be promoted to Division 5 East at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>Should any of the teams finishing in the respective promoted places be a team who had requested to be demoted to the lowest possible Division for the 23-24 season then they will not be allowed promotion. Instead the promotion place will go to the next best placed team should they be eligible.</p> <p>The bottom two teams will be relegated from Division 3 East to 4 East at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below.</p> <p>The bottom four teams will be relegated from Division 4 East to 5 East at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below</p> <p>The bottom team will be relegated from Division 5 East to 6 East at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below</p> <p>The remaining teams in Division 6 East could potentially amalgamate with the remaining teams in Division 5 East Central as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> XV teams for the 2024-2025 season once all promotions have occurred for the 2023-2024 season subject to CMC approval.</p>	
Divisions 3 East Central, 4 East Central and 5 East Central	The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 3 East Central will be promoted to Division 2 East Central at the end	Up to 10 Clubs in each Division (Up to 30 Clubs in total).

	<p>of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 4 East Central will be promoted to Division 3 East Central at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 5 East Central will be promoted to Division 4 East Central at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>Should any of the teams finishing in the respective promoted places be a team who had requested to be demoted to the lowest possible Division for the 23-24 season then they will not be allowed promotion. Instead the promotion place will go to the next best placed team should they be eligible.</p> <p>The bottom four teams will be relegated from Division 3 East Central to 4 East Central at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below.</p> <p>The bottom four teams will be relegated from Division 4 East Central to 5 East Central at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below.</p> <p>The remaining teams in Division 5 East Central could potentially amalgamate with the remaining teams in Division 6 East as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> XV teams for the 2024-2025 season once all promotions have occurred for the 2023-2024 season subject to CMC approval.</p>	
<p>Division 3 West Central, 4 West Central and 5 West Central</p>	<p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 3 West Central will be promoted to Division 2 West Central at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 4 West Central will be promoted to</p>	<p>Up to 10 Clubs in each Division (up to 30 Clubs in total).</p>

	<p>Division 3 West Central at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The Clubs finishing in first and second place in Division 5 West Central will be promoted to Division 4 West Central at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>Should any of the teams finishing in the respective promoted places be a team who had requested to be demoted to the lowest possible Division for the 23-24 season then they will not be allowed promotion. Instead the promotion place will go to the next best placed team should they be eligible.</p> <p>The bottom two teams will be relegated from Division 3 West Central to 4 West Central at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below.</p> <p>The bottom two teams will be relegated from Division 4 West Central to 5 West Central at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season subject to points (i) &amp; (ii) below.</p> <p>The remaining teams in Division 5 West Central could potentially amalgamate with the remaining teams in other Divisions as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> XV teams for the 2024-2025 season once all promotions have occurred for the 2023-2024 season subject to CMC approval.</p>	
Divisions 3 West A and 3 West B	<p>The Champion Club in each of Divisions 3 West A and 3 West B will be promoted to Division 2 West at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.</p> <p>The team finishing in second, third and fourth place in Division 3 West A will then be promoted to the newly formed Division 3 West.</p> <p>The team finishing in second, third, fourth and fifth place in</p>	Up to 10 Clubs in each Division (

	<p>Division 3 West B will then be promoted to the newly formed Division 3 West.</p> <p>The remaining teams in Division 3 West A and West B will then be placed into a newly formed Division 4 West A or West B based on a Geographical basis subject to (i) and (ii) below.</p> <p>The Union will also consider 2<sup>nd</sup> XV Teams as well as teams from Division 5 West Central to be considered and placed within Division 4 West A and West B.</p> <p>Should any of the teams finishing in the respective promoted places be a team who had requested to be demoted to the lowest possible Division for the 23-24 season then they will not be allowed promotion. Instead the promotion place will go to the next best placed team should they be eligible.</p>	
Division 1 North	<p>The Club that finishes first in Division 1 North at the end of the 2022-2023 Season will be the Divisional Champion Club and will be declared the Champion Club of North Wales.</p> <p>The bottom two Clubs will be relegated to Division 2 North.</p> <p>Should a team wish to enter the WRU Championship for the 24-25 season, they will need to make their intentions known to the WRU prior to November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Please note that the only team considered for this would be the winner of Division 1 North and further consultation will be required during the season.</p>	Up to 12 Clubs.
Division 2 North	<p>The top two Clubs in the Division at the end of the 2022-2023 season will be promoted to Division 1 North.</p> <p>The bottom two Clubs in Division 2 North will be relegated to</p>	Up to 10 Clubs.

	<p>Division 3 with one side being relegated to Division 3 North East and one to 3 North West based on the best geographical fit.</p> <p>Please refer to note below in relation to an exception to the relegation process.</p> <p>Note: Should one of the Clubs in Division 2 who gains promotion be a Second XV team whose First XV is in Division 1 at the end of 2022-2023 Season the Second XV Team will not be promoted.</p> <p>In this instance, there will be only one team relegated.</p>	
<p>Division 3 North East and 3 North West</p>	<p>The Clubs finishing in first place in Division 3 North East and 3 North West at the end of the 2022-2023 season will be promoted to Division 2 North</p> <p>Note: Should the Club finishing in first place in Division 3 North East or North West be a Second XV team whose First XV is in Division 2 at the end of 2022-2023 Season the Second XV Team will not be promoted.</p> <p>In this instance, there will be no promotion to or relegation from Division 2 North from this Division.</p> <p>Should any of the teams finishing in the respective promoted places be a team who had requested to be demoted to the lowest possible Division for the 23-24 season then they will not be allowed promotion. Instead the promotion place will go to the next best placed team should they be eligible.</p>	<p>Up to 11 Clubs in each Division (to include 6 Second XV Teams)</p>

**CLAUSES**

- (i) For the avoidance of doubt, subject to clause (iv) below, Clubs playing in Championship to Division 6 of the Leagues will be placed by the Union within the relevant Division on a meritocracy basis, with the exception of Division 4 West A and B whereby geography will also be considered.

- (ii) In the event that two or more Clubs from the same geographical location are promoted or relegated, the Union reserves the right to move Clubs throughout the National Leagues from one Division to another at its discretion. Unless there are exceptional circumstances there shall be no less than 10 Clubs in each League.
- (iii) In the event that a Club fails to complete its League programme, the Competitions Management Committee shall have the discretion to deal with that Club, as well as any consequential changes to the National League, as it deems appropriate. Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the Club concerned to the lowest Division and promoting such other Club(s) as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.
- (iv) A Club which fails to complete its League programme and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

In the event that a Club fails to complete any scheduled National League match during the season, the Competitions Management Committee shall consider the circumstances of that failure and apply such sanctions in accordance with these National League Rules as it deems appropriate in its absolute discretion. The Competitions Management Committee shall also consider any necessary consequential changes to the National League, as it deems appropriate. Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the relevant Club to the lowest Division in the League pyramid and also expelling them from the National League pyramid. Where a Club has been expelled from the National League, the Competitions Management Committee may promote such other Club(s) from other Division(s) as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.

If a Club's team fails to play any scheduled National League match in a season and that Club's team also fails, in the following successive season, to play any scheduled National League match, the Competitions Management Committee shall consider the same and determine, in its absolute discretion, what sanction(s) should be applied. Such sanctions may include expelling the Club from the National League for the following season. Where a Club is expelled from the National League, the Competitions Management Committee may apply such criteria and/or conditions as it deems appropriate in its absolute discretion in respect of the Club prior to permitting the Club's participation in the National League in future seasons. This may include evidencing the ability to complete a full League program of fixtures in a respective District/Conference League.

A Club which fails to complete its League programme and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

#### **4. Structure of League for the 2024-2025 Season**

The National League structure for the 2024-2025 season will be implemented in accordance with the Competition Review which was approved by the Community Game Board and where practical the optimum number of teams in each Division will be 10 teams except Premiership and Championship East and West where there will be no more than 14 teams.

#### **5. Eligibility to Participate**

##### **a. Clubs**

- (i) The Competition will be restricted to those Clubs who are full members of the Union, RGC1404 (North Wales Development Region) and Clubs which are District Members of the Union, and which conforms to the provisions for the time being of the Union's Memorandum of Association and the Articles and which, taking part therein, must be

represented by each Club's First XV with the exception of the second XV team in Division 2 North and fourteen second XV teams in Division 3 North East and Division 3 North West respectively.

- (ii) In order to compete in the Premier Division, Clubs must comply with the Premier Division Criteria.
- (iii) In order to compete in leagues below the Premier Division, Clubs and District Members must comply with any licensing requirements promulgated by the Union from time to time.
- (iv) All Clubs have a responsibility to field a minimum of twelve players at the commencement of any National League match.

#### **b. Players**

- (i) No player may represent a Club in the National League unless he is a registered or dual registered member of that Club or a permit has been granted for him to play by his parent Club/Regional Team. With the exception of registered players from a Club who has withdrawn from the League. In this instance, the Union may grant the permit to play for a Club in the National League.
- (ii) No player may play in any National League fixture unless they are at least 18 years of age. The only exception to this regulation is for Academy registered players who are no younger than 17 years of age and have received dispensation from their respective Academy Manager and parent or guardian.
- (iii) A player has to be registered in Wales with a Club, a Regional Team or Regional Academy, a Development Region and its associated Academy, in addition to the National Academy, and his registration must be notified to the Union before he is eligible to play for a Club in the National League.

All players must be named on the team sheet submitted by the Club to the Match Official prior to the match (see the protocol for matches played in Wales as set out in the Union's Disciplinary Regulations). The Team sheets must also identify the tight head, loose head replacements. In addition, the Team sheets must identify the Head Coach of each team.

- (iv) The team sheet **must** identify any player(s) who is on permit or dual registration together with their parent Club/Regional Team.
- (v) **Team sheets are to be submitted electronically via the relevant app and to the match official prior to kick off of each respective League fixture. This is mandatory for all clubs and paper copies will not be accepted.**
- (vi) It is mandatory that any player who has suffered concussion shall not participate in any match or training session for a minimum period of 21 days. All players should be reviewed by a medical practitioner and should not return to train or play until symptom free and having successfully completed the WRU graduated return to play programme. It is recommended that players should not return to full contact sport until cleared by a medical practitioner. The WRU Concussion Guidance document is available online at [Welsh Rugby Union | Club & Community | Concussion \(wru.wales\)](http://welshrugbyunion.com/club-community/concussion) - Please also follow the UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport - <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/9ced1e1a-5d3b-4871-9209-bff4b2575b46.pdf>

- (vii) In relation to Division 2 & 3 North East and West and the Second XV Teams participating in the National League. Other than in exceptional circumstances, any player who has played for the First XV of any Club for a total of 12 times, whether that be in the National League or respective National Knockout Competition for Division 3 North teams, will be precluded from participating in the Second XV Teams in the National League. For the avoidance of doubt this includes playing on permit.
- (viii) As per (vi) the Second XV Teams participating in Division 2 North and Division 3 North East and West will be required to submit to the Union's Regulatory & Competitions Manager clearly defined and separate First XV and Second XV squads in the interest of fairness with these players then requiring permits to play for the side they are not nominated with.
- (ix) It is strongly recommended that each club is to have a nominated and qualified First Aider with up to date with qualifications for each National League Fixture and training session. Please contact the WRU for more information on St. Johns Ambulance courses should any club be interested.

- 5.1.1 Premier Division Clubs may have registered up to two non-Welsh qualified players (being players who at the date of registration are not qualified to take the field of play as a member of a team at senior level to represent Wales in accordance with World Rugby Regulation 8.1) who will at any one time be eligible to play for it in the National League (i.e. if one or both non-Welsh qualified player(s) leave the Club he/they may be replaced providing the number of non-Welsh qualified players at that Club does not exceed two). **Only two non-Welsh qualified players may be named in the match day squad for any National League or Cup fixture.** In respect of all professional or semi-professional player who do not have a right to work in the United Kingdom, a licence to employ the player must be obtained by the Club from the UK Border Agency. An application for a licence to employ a professional or semi-professional rugby player has to be supported by the Union. The Union will not support an application for a licence to employ a professional or semi-professional rugby player other than an application made by a Professional Region, a Development Region or a Premier Division Club. The numbers of non-Welsh qualified players which may be contracted by a Professional Region is governed by the Rugby Services Agreements between the Union and the Regional Organisations.
- 5.1.2 Clubs in the Championship Division through to Division 6 are not limited to the number of non-Welsh qualified players or overseas players they are allowed to register in their respective squads however each team is only permitted to select a maximum of 2 overseas players in each matchday team (such players must provide documentary evidence to prove they have a right to reside in the UK and Clubs must confirm such players do not receive any material benefit from playing Rugby Union).
- 5.1.3 For the avoidance of doubt, an overseas player is one who is not qualified to play for Wales at the date of registration and who cannot prove to the satisfaction of the Union that he is or would have been entitled to the rights granted under Title III of the EC Treaty or under the EEA or other European Agreement (i.e., a person who has European workers' rights). **Rules 5.1.1 – 5.1.3 will remain the same for the duration of the 2023-2024 season, save that the WRU reserves the right to review and amend these rules if necessary.**
- 5.1.4 **Any Premier Division Club** who have more than two non-Welsh qualified players registered will forfeit £15,000 from their Union distribution monies for every additional non-Welsh qualified registered player in the squad.
- 5.1.5 **Clubs in the Premier Division** which run only one senior team will be limited to having up to 32 registered players who will be eligible to play for the Club in National League matches. Clubs in



the Premier Division which run two or more senior teams, will be allowed to have more than 32 registered players who will be eligible to play in National League matches.

5.1.6 A Player will be ineligible to play for a Club in any National League fixture if he transfers or is registered after 11:59 pm on 31 January 2024, unless such a player is:

- (i) a player registered with that Club's Youth team, who has attained the age of 18 and is subsequently registered as a senior player with that Club;
- (ii) a player who is subject to a permanent residential relocation from another area where extensive travel (in excess of 100 miles round trip) precludes the player continuing to play for his former Club (applies to Clubs playing in the Championship and Divisions 1–6 only). Before such a player may play, the Competitions Management Committee must sanction the player's registration; or
- (iii) a player not previously registered with any other rugby Club. Before such a player may play, the Competitions Management Committee must sanction the player's registration; or
- (iv) a player not registered with any club prior to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. For the avoidance of doubt, if a player was de-registered on January 30<sup>th</sup> and then wishes to register for a new club on February 1<sup>st</sup> or at any time in the Season thereafter then this would be acceptable. However, if a player was de-registered after 11:59pm on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, then he would be ineligible to register with another club as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

Player transfer requests must be lodged online via MyWRU with the Rugby Operations Department of the Union by 11:59 pm on 31 January 2024, in accordance with the Union's Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

5.1.7 A player who transfers in the period between the end of the previous season and 11:59 pm on 31 January 2024 will be eligible to play for his new Club in National League matches provided that the process has been completed in accordance with the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

#### 5.4 **Player Loan System**

The player loan scheme has now been removed and will not be allowed to be used by any team with the exception of the Regions.

#### 5.5. **Player Permits**

The Player Permit Scheme will operate as follows:

5.5.1 In any National League match:

- (i) With the exception of Clubs in the Premier Division, a Club may play up to a maximum of four players in total on permit in a National League match.

With the exception of the Premier Division, there will be no more than four non-primary players with a club in the Championship and National League made up of dual registrations, Academy players and permits allowed in a match day squad. For clarity, a non-primary player is a player whose primary registration is held by another Club or entity.

- (ii) Clubs in the Premier Division may play up to a maximum of 23 players on permit in a National League match.

- (iii) A player with a Regional Team may only play on permit for a Premier Division Club in a National League match.
- (iv) No overseas players (as defined in Rule 5.1.3) may play on permit unless that player is registered with a Regional Team and then he may only play for a Premier Division Club.
- (v) A player who is registered with a Regional Academy may play on permit for a Club in any Division. The permit may be granted only by an authorised representative of the Regional Academy and must be lodged with the Union’s Fixture and Competitions Manager.
- (vi) For any player who has U19 eligibility, which is 19 years of age between September 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 and May 31<sup>st</sup> 2024, they will be eligible to permit to any team within the National League pyramid regardless of the Club they are registered with. These permits are to be made known to the Union’s Rugby Operations department for verification.
- (vii) Permits may be obtained as stipulated in and subject to the restrictions contained in the following table:

Division	Clubs from where permits may be obtained
Premier Division	<p>Regional Teams (no limit)  Regional Academy (no limit)  Premier Division (no limit)  Championship and Divisions 1 to 6 (no limit)  District Member clubs (no limit)  (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 23 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Premier Division players will be allowed to permit down into the Championship as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club.</p>
Championship East & West	<p>Regional Academy (max 4)  Premier Division (max 4)  Championship (max 4)  Divisions 1 to 6 (max 4)  District Member clubs (max 4)  (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Championship players will be allowed to permit down as low as Division 2 only as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club</p>
Division 1	<p>Regional Academy (max 4)  Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the Club who held the previous registration)  Championship (max 4 )  Divisions 1 to 6 (max 4)</p>

	<p>District Member clubs (max 4) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Division 1 players will be allowed to permit down as low to Division 3 clubs only as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club</p>
Division 2	<p>Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the Club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4) Divisions 1 to 6 (max 4) District Member clubs (max 4) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Division 2 players will be allowed to permit down to Division 4 clubs only as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club</p>
Division 3	<p>Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Divisions 1 to 6 (max 4) District Member Clubs (max 4)</p>
Division 4	<p>Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 1 (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 2-6 (max 4) District Member Clubs (max 4)</p>
Division 5	<p>Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 1 (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 2 (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 3-6 (max 4) District Member Clubs (max 4)</p>

Division 6	Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 1 (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 2 (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 3-6 (max 4) District Member Clubs (max 4)
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- (viii) A permit must be sought for each match in which a player plays and such permit may be granted for a match at any time during the season subject to the conditions set out in Regulation 7 of the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.
- (ix) Electronic team sheets submitted prior to the start of a match must identify players on permit or dual registration and their parent Club/Regional Team. The Team sheets must also identify the tight head, loose head replacements. In addition, the Team sheets must identify the Head Coach of each team.

#### 5.6 Dual Registration scheme

Details of the Dual Registration scheme are set out in Regulation 8 of the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

University students will be allowed to dual register with a club in England and Scotland whilst also being able to play for their registered club in Wales under a Home Nations Student Pass. Once approved by both clubs and Union, it will mean that international clearance is not required for the player for either team throughout the season.

#### 5.7 Replacements

**In the Premier Division** up to eight replacements may be named for any National League match provided that, of the 23 named players and replacements, there must be six suitably trained and experienced players who can play in the front row to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion that a replacement tight-head prop forward and on the first occasion that a replacement loose-head prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

In the Championship East and West, Divisions 1 to 6 and Division 1 to 3 North East and North West up to five replacements may be named for any National League match. **It is recommended that there are five suitably trained and experienced players who can play in the front row.** It is recommended that it will include Two Hookers and three (3) prop forwards. The replacement prop should be either a Tight Head or Loose Head or a player capable of playing on both Heads. This will ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required the game can continue safely with contested scrums. If a Tight Head were to be required and a team only has a Loose Head as a Front Row replacement and he is not trained or able to play in that position, then the referee will order uncontested scrums. Similarly, if a Loose Head were to be required and a team only had a Tight Head named as a Front Row replacement and he is not trained or able to play in that position then again uncontested scrums will be ordered by the referee.

If they are available, a team must have three (3) front row players in the front row at all times in an uncontested scrum, only when there is no available front row replacement or substitute is any other player permitted to play in the front row Law 3.15 applies

A Club may play without any named replacements. If a Club names 12 players only there is no need to name more than three suitably trained and experienced front row players.

Apart from the Premier Division, teams can name up to five (5) replacements despite not having five front row players within a matchday squad of 20. Therefore, should teams only have three front row players within their matchday squad and are able to start with contested scrums, they would still be entitled to have five (5) replacements.

However, should a team not be able to start a game with contested scrums then they would be required to start with 14 players but still be entitled to name up to five (5) replacements.

In competitions which allow squads of 23, a player whose departure has caused the referee to order uncontested scrums cannot be replaced, even if a team decided to start the game with less than a 23-man squad.

**For the Premier Division only.** As provided above, when 23 players are nominated in a team there must be six players who can play in the front row to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion that a replacement tight-head prop forward and on the first occasion that a replacement loose-head prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

Where uncontested scrums are ordered as a result of there being no suitably trained and experienced front row players for any reason, the team concerned shall not be entitled to replace the player whose departure caused the uncontested scrums. Law 3.16 applies.

**If a front row player is issued with a red or yellow card and as a result, uncontested scrums are requested, then there is no need to further reduce the playing numbers.**

- Should a team be unable to field a front row at the start of a match, the match will begin with uncontested scrums. In such a scenario, the offending team will have to start the match with 14 players (it is the decision of the offending club which player they choose to remove, save that each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum). The offending club will be entitled to the maximum number of replacements available.
- Should a fixture start with contested scrums but, during the course of the match, a front row forward is unable to continue (the “Injured Forward”):
  - a) Where there is a front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be replaced by the front row forward replacement. In such a scenario, the offending team may elect to move to uncontested scrums. However, should the offending team elect to do so, they must remove another player of their choice from their team (i.e., they will continue the match with 14 players). Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.
  - b) If a team starts a fixture with contested scrummaging but has to go to uncontested scrummaging they will still be allowed to use the named replacements for the remainder of the match but continue with 14 players.

- c) Where there is no front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be removed but not replaced. In such a scenario, the match will proceed with uncontested scrums. Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.
- d) If a team is notified by their opponents prior to a scheduled fixture that scrums will be going uncontested, then the team not electing to begin uncontested will be recommended to name five front row forwards in order to name a squad of 20 in line with National League Regulations.

**NB: In uncontested scrums there must always be 8 players in the scrum and the No.8 from either side cannot pick up.**

#### **CHANGES ARE ALSO IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION 5.7 OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES**

The replacement of a front row forward must come from suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from the nominated replacements.

If after a front row player has been sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended, and there are no further front row players available from the nominated team, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the team electing to go uncontested will be unable to replace the offending player. It is not the responsibility of the match official to determine the suitability of trained front row replacements nor their availability, as this is a team responsibility.

To avoid confusion and to make everyone aware of the rules relating to the number of substitutes that can be used, please see the following examples, relating to World Rugby Law 3 (Number of Players) and these National League Rules.

- (a) If Team A has only fifteen players (or less) available and it has three suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Team A will also be entitled to up to five replacements.
- (b) If Team A has fifteen players (or less) and does not have three suitably trained players to play in the front row, then the match will start with uncontested scrums. Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to have five replacements (providing they have 19 available players for selection at the start of the match).
- (c) If Team A has only three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has four suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Both Team A and Team B will be entitled to up to five replacements.
- (d) If Team A has less than three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has five suitably trained front row forwards, either on the field or as replacements, then Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to five replacements (providing they have 19 available players for selection at the start of the match) and Team B will also be entitled to the full complement of replacements (providing they have 20 available players for selection at the start of the match.) The match will start with uncontested scrums.

All suitably trained front row players must be highlighted on the official team sheet prior to the match.

If a match goes to uncontested scrums the relevant details are to be forwarded by the Match Official to the Union's Fixture Manager (see Rule 8b below).

**In relation to uncontested scrums, the Number 8 from both teams are not allowed to pick up from the base of the scrum**

**AT ALL TIMES SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT.**

**5.8 Rolling Substitutions**

**Teams will be permitted to use rolling substitutions from the Championship and below with the following provisions in place**

In a match where consent has been given prior to the Season and subject to Regulations each team shall be permitted to use rolling substitutions of not more than the maximum number of the Player interchanges (“Player Interchanges”) set out in the table below:

**Number of Replacements - Player Interchanges**

Up to 3	8
4	9
5	10
6 or more	12

- After the Player Interchanges have been made no other replacements, substitutions or Player Interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a Player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less Player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row Player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.

If a team opts to go to uncontested scrums, they will not later be allowed to return to contested scrummaging.

- For the avoidance of doubt, Player Interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that if a Player has uncontrolled active bleeding and thus has to leave the field, this will not be classified as a Player Interchange if another Player replaces that Player. If a team has used all of its Player Interchanges, that Player may be replaced and the team shall continue. The Player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- Not more than three Player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and in all cases with the permission of the Referee.
- A Player must enter the field of play on the halfway line.
- A Player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that Player took to the field of play.
- A Player who is previously injured in the match shall not return to play as a Player Interchange.

- In addition to the powers set out in the Laws of the Game, Referees are entitled in their sole opinion to prohibit or postpone a Player Interchange if they believe either that the Player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly or where the replacement Player is not fit to continue playing in the match.
- Any player leaving the field of play with suspected concussion is not allowed to return to the field of play.
- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions Regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game these Regulations shall take precedence.

## 6. Entry Conditions

All Clubs participating in the National League shall comply with:

- a. these National League Rules;
- b. the Union's Memorandum of Association and the Articles;
- c. the Regulations and Resolutions of the Board of Directors of the Union;
- d. the World Rugby Bye Laws, Resolutions and Regulations relating to the Game, and
- e. the Laws of the Game.

## 7. Responsibility for Organisation

All matches in every Division of the National League will be under the control of the Union. The Competitions Management Committee will deal with all matters relating to every Division of the National League.

## 8. General Rules (refer to attached Guidance Document)

All National League matches must be played and each Club must complete its National League programme. In the event that a National League match is not played the matter will be reported to the Competitions Management Committee who will establish why the match was not played. Where a match does not take place, it is the responsibility of the Honorary Secretary or Fixture Secretary of each Club to notify the Union's Regulatory & Competitions Manager, in writing, within 24 hours of the reason(s) for the postponement (with supporting evidence if necessary). It is also the responsibility of the home side to make every effort to notify the appointed match official of the game not taking place. If the Competitions Management Committee is not satisfied with the explanation of the Club concerned it will apply a 2-point deduction. Other sanctions available to the Competitions Management Committee include (but are not limited to) the deduction of League points, the imposition of a fine, expunging the Club's League points total and/or expulsion from the National League.

### a. Passive scrums

- i) For all divisions other than the Premier Division



No match may be postponed because of the lack of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards. The match must be played on the due date with uncontested scrums. If prior to any match a Club becomes aware that it will be unable to field for that match a sufficient number of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, notify the opposing club and match officials that it will elect to take uncontested scrums during the match. Following the match, the Competitions Management Committee may consider the conduct of the Club and the reason for uncontested scrums and whether any sanction should be applied. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

ii) **For the Premier Division**

If a Club postpones a match because of the lack of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards, the Competitions Management Committee may consider the reasons for the postponement. It shall be a matter for the Club which caused the match to be postponed justifying its decision. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, it must continue the match with 14 men. For the avoidance of doubt this will apply regardless of whether the team consists of 22 or 23 men.

iii) **For all Divisions**

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, the matter will be reported to the Competitions Management Committee. The Competitions Management Committee may consider why passive scrums were necessary during that match. It shall be a matter for the Club which opted for uncontested scrums to explain to the Competitions Management Committee why it did so. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, it must continue to have 8 players committed to each scrum. In addition, only the player in the scrum half position may play the ball from the scrum. For the avoidance of doubt the ball may not be played by the player in number 8 position within the scrum.

**b. Declaration of winners.**

Winners of National League matches will be teams which have scored the greater number of points at the end of each match. For the avoidance of doubt and in compliance with the Laws of the Game (Law 6.A.12), the Referee will be the final arbiter as to the score of each National League match. National League points shall be awarded as follows:

Win	-	4 points
Draw	-	2 points
Defeat	-	0 points
Bonus Points	-	1 point for a team scoring 4 or more tries
		1 point for a team losing by 7 points or less

- c. **National League placings** will be decided on the basis of League points gained during the season. Where teams have gained equal numbers of League points, the team with the most wins shall be given preference. If the number of wins is equal, the team with the fewest losses shall be given preference. If the number of losses is equal then the Club having recorded the most tries in the Season shall be given preference. If the number of tries is equal the points 'for' shall be divided by the points 'against' and the team with the highest factor shall be declared to have the better record.
- d. **Duration of play** – 80 minutes each match (40 minutes each half) plus any time permitted by the Match Official for delays (Laws of the Game – Law 5). At half time, an interval of not more than 10 minutes is allowed.
- e. **Fixture Arrangements.** National League matches must be played on the dates allocated unless otherwise previously agreed by the Competitions Management Committee. These will be decided by the Competitions Management Committee and circulated to Clubs as soon as practicable. The match will take place on the home Club's first pitch or on a suitable alternative.
- f. **Notification of Results.** The appointed Match Official will notify the Union of the result of each match by submitting the match result card electronically within 1 hour of the match taking place via the match official app. The appointed Match Official will also submit by e-mail team lists, which must be completed by officials from each team and handed to the match official prior to the kick-off.
- g. **Postponed, rearranged, and abandoned matches**
- i) Postponed or Mutually Rearranged National League matches must be played on the allocated dates unless a match is postponed because of ground or weather conditions, or the Clubs concerned have mutually agreed to the postponement and have received the prior consent of the Union to its rearrangement.

For a mutually agreed fixture the Club Secretary or Club Fixture Secretary of both clubs **MUST** inform the Competitions Manager in writing no later than 24 hours prior to the fixture so the postponement can be granted by the Union.

Both Clubs must copy each other into the email correspondence to confirm the mutual agreement.

Failure to produce the written evidence of a mutual agreement will result in the offending club being deducted 2 points.

Consent to postpone fixtures in other such circumstances will not be given if sought less than 2 months prior to the fixture. (i.e. Weddings/Special Occasions) Where both Clubs have received the consent of the Union to postpone a fixture, then that fixture must be played, where practicable, within 21 days of the postponement.

If the Clubs cannot agree on an alternative date within 14 days of a postponement due to weather conditions the Union will determine the date of the rearranged fixture which will be the next available Saturday for both Clubs during the season, with this not being subject to appeal by clubs unless a mutual agreement is reached on a rearranged date.

Fixtures that are unable to be rearranged for an available Saturday will automatically be set by the Regulatory & Competitions Manager to take place midweek following Daylight Savings Time which is March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

If the ground of the home Club is not fit because of weather or ground conditions or is unavailable for any other reason and the away fixture has not yet been played, Clubs should endeavour to switch the venue to the Away Club so that the fixture is played on that date.

Both Clubs must notify the Union's Fixture and Registrations Co-ordinator, in writing, of the new fixture date at least four working days prior to the match being played. This timeline may be reduced in exceptional circumstances subject to the agreement of both Clubs and the availability of a suitably qualified referee.

Each Club must notify the Fixture & Registrations Co-Ordinator in writing of the postponement or rearrangement of any fixture. If this written notification is not received the match will be deemed to be an unfulfilled fixture and the appropriate sanctions may be applied.

Any dispute in respect of such cancellation, postponement or rearrangement shall be referred to the Competitions Management Committee for determination.

When ground or weather conditions demand, and if requested to do so, an opportunity **must** be given to an official representative of the visiting Club, a Union Match Official living locally of similar standing to the appointed Match Official or an Officer of the Union to view the situation in sufficient time to allow matches to be postponed preventing unnecessary travelling. Clubs are recommended to undertake ground inspections no earlier than one hour before the scheduled kick off time except in cases where an earlier inspection is required to prevent an Away Club undertaking a long journey or in cases where the Match Official is travelling from a long distance. **Should the Clubs disagree on the condition of the ground, the match will not be played and the match will be rescheduled.** The Match Official appointed by the Union will report on the matter and that report will be considered by the Competitions Management Committee.

All matches must be played on the set dates except in the case of postponement because of adverse ground or weather conditions and/or requests from the appointed Broadcasters.

(ii) Abandoned Matches

All matches must be played to full time. The Match Official is to be the sole judge of the amount of time played. If a match is abandoned, then both Clubs' Honorary Secretaries or Fixture Secretaries must separately notify the Union of the fact in writing no later than 48 hours following the abandonment. Should there be any disputes, the CMC will have the discretion to confirm the result of the game regardless of score.

Should the difference in score be 30 or more points then the result of the fixture shall stand and be submitted including try count and there will be no requirement for a rearrangement. This is regardless of whether both teams agree or not.

If the difference in score is 29 points or less and if both Clubs agree then the Competitions Management Committee may permit the score, at the time of the abandonment, to stand. However, if both teams are in not in agreement, then the match is to be replayed. The WRU has the discretion to make decisions in relation to the result of each respective tie in the interest of fairness and integrity of the Competition.

Where such an abandoned match is to be replayed, the match will be played at the original venue or at a venue determined by the home Club. Any National League fixture which has been abandoned and is required to be played again must be rearranged by the Clubs and the date of the rearrangement notified to the Union's Fixture and Registrations Co-ordinator no later than 21 days of the original date. If details of the rearrangement are not supplied by the due date, then the Union will determine the date on which the rearranged fixture will be played. Both Clubs must notify the Union's Fixture and Competitions Manager in writing, of the new fixture date no later than four working days prior to the match being played. This timeline may be reduced in exceptional circumstances, subject to the mutual agreement of both Clubs and the availability of a suitably qualified referee.

h. Protests and Disputes

- (i) Save for matters which fall to be determined in accordance with the Union's Disciplinary Regulations, the Competition Management Committee shall be responsible for and have discretion in dealing with any protest or dispute arising out of the National League or these National League Rules (which shall include those relating to the application of the Premier Division Criteria). Any such protest or dispute must be made by a Club in writing to the Union's Administration Manager and accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be refunded. No protest or dispute relating to matches played in the Competition will be considered if made more than **48 hours** after the end of the relevant match has taken place. The Competitions Management Committee shall have discretion to investigate any breach of these National League Rules at any time and to take such action as it shall deem appropriate. The Club who the appeal is made against will also be informed of the decision to do so by the Union once it has been agreed to hear the appeal.
- (ii) Any Club that wishes to appeal a decision of the Competitions Management Committee made pursuant to these National League Rules may do so to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors, which may include the appointment of a legally qualified independent Chair, provided that the Club's appeal is lodged in writing, with the Union's Competitions Manager no later than 48 hours of the Competitions Management Committee's decision being notified to it, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be returned. If the decision is given orally, the period of 48 hours shall run from the date of the oral decision but otherwise shall run from the date of receipt of the decision in writing by the Honorary Secretary of the

Club. Please note that there is no obligation of the WRU or Competitions Management Committee to appoint a legally qualified independent Chair.

- (iii) In carrying out their functions pursuant to these National League Rules, the Competitions Management Committee and any appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors of the Union pursuant to Rule 8i(ii) shall have the power to regulate their own procedure in respect of the matters which fall to be considered by them.
- (iv) It should be borne in mind that the bodies dealing with any protest or dispute, to include an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors, are not courts of law and are disciplinary, rather than arbitral, bodies. A member of the Competitions Management Committee will be entitled to attend any appeal to provide the rationale for the original decision taken. The representative of the Competitions Management Committee will not be a voting member at the appeal.

Please be aware of the WRU Disciplinary Regulations to remind players, coaches and spectators of their conduct and behaviour for all matches. Please be aware that should the Disciplinary Regulations not be adhered to then Club's may be subject to sanctions such as points deductions.

i. Penalties

- (i) The Competitions Management Committee may apply any appropriate sanction it deems fit to any Club without limitation, found to be in default, or failing to comply with these National League Rules.
- (ii) Where any Club has been found to have included an ineligible player (that is, a player who is not registered with a Club or granted a permit or is dual registered or a player whose name does not appear on the team sheet submitted by the Club in a National League match), the Competitions Management Committee shall have the power to penalise the offending Club further by the loss of League points and scores it may have accrued during the match and expunge the result from the League table.

Before action is taken under Rules i(i) or (ii), the Club will be offered the benefits of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Union.

- (iii) An official representative of both home and visiting teams will submit an electronic team sheet prior to the kick-off. Only those players named on this list will be eligible to play in the match. An official representative of each Club has the right to examine their opponent's team list before and immediately after the match. A Club wishing to make an objection will bring it to the notice of the Match Official who will record the same. The Club raising the objection will bring it to the notice of the Union's Competitions Manager no later than 48 hours after the end of the relevant match taking place, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may, or may not be returned.

j. Match Officials

Match Officials shall be appointed by the Union for all National League matches.

k. Kick Off

The kick-off time for National League matches shall be in accordance with the Union's Resolution 15, however, it is recommended that it is standardised at 2.30pm for Saturday matches for the Championship East and West and Divisions 1 to 6 and Divisions 1 to 3 North East and North West. Clubs may agree a different kick-off time to that specified by the Union and shall request the Union's prior approval of the same which will usually be no later than seven days prior to the date of the relevant match. Where League fixtures are scheduled to be played on the day of an international rugby union match in which the Senior Men's Welsh National Team is participating, Clubs may agree a different kick-off time to that specified by the Union and shall request the Union's prior approval of the same which will usually be no later than seven days prior to the date of the relevant match.

For Premier Division matches, kick off times and days on which the matches shall be played will be determined by the Union and broadcasters for televised games and shall be notified to Premier Division Clubs by the Union.

**Matches selected for broadcast are also expected to be played on the date and time determined by the Union and respective broadcaster. Should a team fail to fulfil its obligation in playing these matches on the requested date then they may be subject to harsher punishments and sanctions by the Competitions Management Committee which may include points deductions and or fines.**

In circumstances where, as a result of an agreement between the Union and any third-party media organisation, that organisation wishes to broadcast a National League fixture (the relevant fixture) then the Clubs involved in the relevant fixture must ensure that the relevant fixture is played on the designated date and time as notified to the Clubs by the Union unless there are exceptional circumstances for failing to do so.

**In the event that a relevant fixture does not take place on the date and at the time allocated to it by the Union then the Club responsible for the default may be subject to such fines and other punishments as the Competitions Management Committee consider just and equitable having regard to all the circumstances of the case.**

Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the Club concerned to the lowest Division and promoting such other Club(s) as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.

The fact that a National League Fixture is a relevant fixture shall be deemed to be an aggravating factor

A Club which fails to complete a relevant fixture and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

l. Financial Distribution

No prize money shall be awarded to Divisional winners or runners up apart from the Premier Division.

m. Competitions Management Committee of the WRU

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to adapt any area contained within these regulations to ensure the integrity of the competition is maintained and the competition is concluded in a clear, fair, and equitable manner.

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to suspend any sanction contained within these League rules should they deem it necessary and appropriate.



**THE WELSH RUGBY UNION NATIONAL WOMEN'S LEAGUE RULES 2023-2024**

**1. Description:**

The Competition shall be called:

- i) In respect of the Premier Division, "The Admiral Women's Premiership;" and
- ii) In respect of the Championship, North East & West Divisions, "The WRU Admiral Women's National Leagues".

**2. Interpretation:**

For the purposes of these National League Rules, the following terms have the meaning assigned to them:

- **ARTICLES** shall mean the Articles of Association of the Union.
- **CLUB** means a Club that is a member of the Union only and does not include Affiliated Organisations (as defined in the Articles) or any other entity which may be admitted to membership of the Union.
- **DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS** shall mean the disciplinary regulations of the Union for the time being in force
- **DISTRICT MEMBER** shall have the definition given in the Articles.
- **COMPETITIONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** means the Committee appointed by the Board of Directors of the Union in accordance with the Articles which is a Sub Committee of the Community Game Board.
- **UNION** means The Welsh Rugby Union Limited.

All other defined terms shall be interpreted in accordance with the Union's Memorandum of Association and Articles.

**3. Form**

*The League comprises 5 Divisions, which shall be formed as follows:*

<i>Premier Division</i>	-	<i>8 Clubs</i>
<i>Championship</i>	-	<i>7 Clubs</i>
<i>North Division</i>	-	<i>6 Clubs</i>
<i>East Division</i>	-	<i>8 Clubs</i>
<i>West Division</i>	-	<i>8 Clubs</i>

**Note:** the table below sets out the position regarding promotion and relegation at the end of the 2023-2024 Season.



<i>Division</i>	<i>Promotion and relegation at the end of 2023-2024 Season</i>
Premier	<p>The top team at the conclusion of the season will be declared the Champion Club.</p> <p>The team finishing bottom at the conclusion of the season will be relegated to the Championship for the 24-25 season.</p>
Championship	<p>The top team at the conclusion of the season will be declared the Champion Club.</p> <p>There will be no relegation at the conclusion of the season due to the potential of further Leagues or restructuring for the 24-25 season.</p> <p>Further consultation will be held throughout the season.</p>
North, East and West Division	<p>The top team at the conclusion of the season in each respective Division will be declared the Champion Club.</p> <p>There will be no automatic promotion at the conclusion of the season due to the potential of further Leagues or restructuring for the 24-25 season.</p> <p>Further consultation will be held throughout the season with the opportunity to play in a higher Division for the 24-25 season discussed.</p>

## CLAUSES

- (i) For the avoidance of doubt, subject to clause (iii) below, Clubs playing in Premiership and Championship of the Leagues will be placed by the Union within the relevant Division on a meritocracy basis, with the North, East and West Divisions based on geography.
- (ii) In the event that a Club fails to complete its League programme, the Competitions Management Committee shall have the discretion to deal with that Club, as well as any consequential changes to the National League, as it deems appropriate. Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the Club concerned to the lowest Division and promoting such other Club(s) as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.

- (iii) A Club which fails to complete its League programme and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

In the event that a Club fails to complete any scheduled National League match during the season, the Competitions Management Committee shall consider the circumstances of that failure and apply such sanctions in accordance with these National League Rules as it deems appropriate in its absolute discretion. The Competitions Management Committee shall also consider any necessary consequential changes to the National League, as it deems appropriate. Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the relevant Club to the lowest Division in the League pyramid and being required to have a year's sabbatical before re-entering the National League structure.

A Club which fails to complete its League programme and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

#### **4. Structure of League for the 2024-2025 Season**

The National League structure for the 2024-2025 season will be discussed with current and new member sides throughout the season with decision made during the season in order to give Clubs as much notice as possible.

#### **5. Eligibility to Participate**

##### **a. Clubs**

- (i) The Competition will be restricted to those Clubs who are full members of the Union with all being registered with the WRU
- (ii) New teams are not permitted to enter the WRU Admiral Women's Leagues until they complete the New Team Process (NTP) and have it confirmed by the WRU.
- (iii) All Clubs have a responsibility to field a minimum of twelve players at the commencement of any National League match.

##### **b. Players**

- (i) No player may represent a Club in the National League unless she is a registered member of that Club or a permit has been granted for her to play by her parent Club. With the exception of registered players from a Club who has withdrawn from the League. In this instance, the Union may grant the permit to play for a Club in the National League.
- (ii) No player may play in any National League fixture unless they are at least 18 years of age. The only exception to this regulation is for players who are no younger than 17 years of age and have received dispensation from the Union's U20 & U18 Lead Coach and parent or guardian.
- (iii) A player has to be registered in Wales with a Club and her registration must be notified to the Union before she is eligible to play for a Club in the National League.

All players must be named on the team sheet submitted by the Club to the Match Official prior to the match (see the protocol for matches played in Wales as set out in the Union's Disciplinary Regulations). The Team sheets must also identify the tight head, loose head replacements. In addition, the Team sheets must identify the Head Coach of each team.

- (iv) The team sheet **must** identify any player(s) who are on permit.
- (v) **Team sheets are to be submitted electronically via the relevant app and to the match official prior to kick off of each respective League fixture. This is mandatory for all clubs and paper copies will not be accepted.**
- (vi) It is mandatory that any player who has suffered concussion shall not participate in any match or training session for a minimum period of 21 days. All players should be reviewed by a medical practitioner and should not return to train or play until symptom free and having successfully completed the WRU graduated return to play programme. It is recommended that players should not return to full contact sport until cleared by a medical practitioner. The WRU Concussion Guidance document is available online at [Welsh Rugby Union | Club & Community | Concussion \(wru.wales\)](http://welshrugbyunion.com/club-and-community/concussion) - Please also follow the UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport - <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/9ced1e1a-5d3b-4871-9209-bff4b2575b46.pdf>
- (vii) It is strongly recommended that each club is to have a nominated and qualified First Aider with up to date with qualifications for each National League Fixture and training session. Please contact the WRU for more information on St. Johns Ambulance courses should any club be interested.

5.1.1 A Player will be ineligible to play for a Club in any National League fixture if she transfers or is registered after 11:59 pm on 31 January 2024, unless such a player is:

- (i) a player registered with that Club's Youth team, who has attained the age of 18 and is subsequently registered as a senior player with that Club;
- (ii) a player who is subject to a permanent residential relocation from another area where extensive travel (in excess of 100 miles round trip) precludes the player continuing to play for her former Club. Before such a player may play, the Competitions Management Committee must sanction the player's registration; or
- (iii) a player not previously registered with any other rugby Club. Before such a player may play, the Competitions Management Committee must sanction the player's registration; or
- (iv) a player not registered with any club prior to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. For the avoidance of doubt, if a player was de-registered on January 30<sup>th</sup> and then wishes to register for a new club on February 1<sup>st</sup> or at any time in the Season thereafter then this would be acceptable. However, if a player was de-registered after 11:59pm on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, then she would be ineligible to register with another club as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

Player transfer requests must be lodged online via MyWRU with the Rugby Operations Department of the Union by 11:59 pm on 31 January 2024, in accordance with the Union's Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

Clubs may only transfer a maximum of 3 players from any one club during a season unless there is mutual agreement between two clubs for additional players.

Transfer of players is only applicable to National League teams as NTP clubs only being allowed to transfer players following the approval of the WRU or by mutual consent.

5.1.2 A player who transfers in the period between the end of the previous season and 11:59 pm on 31 January 2024 will be eligible to play for her new Club in National League matches provided that the process has been completed in accordance with the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

## 5.2 Player Permits

The Player Permit Scheme will operate as follows:

5.2.1 In any National League match:

- (i) A Club may play up to a maximum of four players in total on permit in a National League match.
- (ii) For any player who has U19 eligibility, which is 19 years of age between September 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 and May 31<sup>st</sup> 2024, they will be eligible to permit to any team within the National League pyramid regardless of the Club they are registered with. These permits are to be made known to the Union’s Rugby Operations department for verification.

Permits may be obtained as stipulated in and subject to the restrictions contained in the following table:

Division	Clubs from where permits may be obtained
Premier Division	<p>Premier Division (max 4)                      Championship (max 4)                      North, East and West Divisions (max 4)                      (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Premier Division players will be allowed to permit down into the Championship as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club.</p>
Championship	<p>Premier Division (max 4)                      Championship (max 4)                      North, East and West Divisions (max 4)                      (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Premier Division players will be allowed to permit down into the Championship as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club.</p>
North, East & West Division	Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the Club who held the previous registration)

	<p>Championship (max 4)  North, East and West Divisions (max 4)  (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)</p> <p>Registered Premier Division players will be allowed to permit down into the Championship as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club.</p>
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A permit must be sought for each match in which a player plays and such permit may be granted for a match at any time during the season subject to the conditions set out in Regulation 7 of the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

Electronic team sheets submitted prior to the start of a match must identify players on permit or dual registration and their parent Club/Regional Team. The Team sheets must also identify the tight head, loose head replacements. In addition, the Team sheets must identify the Head Coach of each team.

Permitted players must start on the bench if a Club has 15 players to begin a respective match.

#### 5.6 Dual Registration scheme

University students will be allowed to dual register with a club in England and Scotland whilst also being able to play for their registered club in Wales under a Home Nations Student Pass. Once approved by both clubs and Union, it will mean that international clearance is not required for the player for either team throughout the season.

#### 5.7 Replacements

##### **In all Divisions**

In the Premiership, Championship, Divisions North, East and West up to five replacements may be named for any National League match. **It is recommended that there are five suitably trained and experienced players who can play in the front row.** It is recommended that it will include Two Hookers and three (3) prop forwards. The replacement prop should be either a Tight Head or Loose Head or a player capable of playing on both Heads. This will ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required the game can continue safely with contested scrums. If a Tight Head were to be required and a team only has a Loose Head as a Front Row replacement and he is not trained or able to play in that position, then the referee will order uncontested scrums. Similarly, if a Loose Head were to be required and a team only had a Tight Head named as a Front Row replacement and he is not trained or able to play in that position then again uncontested scrums will be ordered by the referee.

If they are available, a team must have three (3) front row players in the front row at all times in an uncontested scrum, only when there is no available front row replacement or substitute is any other player permitted to play in the front row Law 3.15 applies

A Club may play without any named replacements. If a Club names 12 players only there is no need to name more than three suitably trained and experienced front row players.

However, should a team not be able to start a game with contested scrums then they would be required to start with 14 players but still be entitled to name up to seven (7) replacements.

Where uncontested scrums are ordered as a result of there being no suitably trained and experienced front row players for any reason, the team concerned shall not be entitled to replace the player whose departure caused the uncontested scrums. Law 3.16 applies.

**If a front row player is issued with a red or yellow card and as a result, uncontested scrums are requested, then there is no need to further reduce the playing numbers.**

- Should a team be unable to field a front row at the start of a match, the match will begin with uncontested scrums. In such a scenario, the offending team will have to start the match with 14 players (it is the decision of the offending club which player they choose to remove, save that each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum). The offending club will be entitled to the maximum number of replacements available.
- Should a fixture start with contested scrums but, during the course of the match, a front row forward is unable to continue (the "Injured Forward"):
  - a) Where there is a front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be replaced by the front row forward replacement. In such a scenario, the offending team may elect to move to uncontested scrums. However, should the offending team elect to do so, they must remove another player of their choice from their team (i.e., they will continue the match with 14 players). Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.
  - b) If a team starts a fixture with contested scrummaging but has to go to uncontested scrummaging they will still be allowed to use the named replacements for the remainder of the match but continue with 14 players.
  - c) Where there is no front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be removed but not replaced. In such a scenario, the match will proceed with uncontested scrums. Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.
  - d) If a team is notified by their opponents prior to a scheduled fixture that scrums will be going uncontested, then the team not electing to begin uncontested will be recommended to name five front row forwards.

**NB: In uncontested scrums there must always be 8 players in the scrum and the No.8 from either side cannot pick up.**

#### **CHANGES ARE ALSO IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION 5.7 OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES**

The replacement of a front row forward must come from suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from the nominated replacements.

If after a front row player has been sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended, and there are no further front row players available from the nominated team, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the team electing to go uncontested will be unable to replace the offending player. It is not the responsibility of the match official to determine the suitability of trained front row replacements nor their availability, as this is a team responsibility.

To avoid confusion and to make everyone aware of the rules relating to the number of substitutes that can be used, please see the following examples, relating to World Rugby Law 3 (Number of Players) and these National League Rules.

- (a) If Team A has only fifteen players (or less) available and it has three suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Team A will also be entitled to up to seven replacements.
- (b) If Team A has fifteen players (or less) and does not have three suitably trained players to play in the front row, then the match will start with uncontested scrums. Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to have seven replacements (providing they have 21 available players for selection at the start of the match).
- (c) If Team A has only three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has four suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Both Team A and Team B will be entitled to up to seven replacements.
- (d) If Team A has less than three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has five suitably trained front row forwards, either on the field or as replacements, then Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to seven replacements (providing they have 21 available players for selection at the start of the match) and Team B will also be entitled to the full complement of replacements (providing they have 22 available players for selection at the start of the match.) The match will start with uncontested scrums.
- (e) If Team A only has 12, 13 or 14 players to begin a match, there is a requirement of Team B to match numbers however should Team A lose players as a result of injury or discipline then Team B will not be required to lose further players. In this instance, Team B will be allowed to use 22 players should they be available with the remaining players being used as replacements.
- (f) If Team A only has 12, 13 or 14 players to begin a match, then Team A will be required to have 6 players in a scrum should they start with 12, 7 players in a scrum should they start with 13 and 8 players in a scrum should they start with 14. Team B will be required to match numbers in the Scrum in these instances.

All suitably trained front row players must be highlighted on the official team sheet prior to the match.

If a match goes to uncontested scrums the relevant details are to be forwarded by the Match Official to the Union's Fixture Manager (see Rule 8b below).

**In relation to uncontested scrums, the Number 8 from both teams are not allowed to pick up from the base of the scrum**

**AT ALL TIMES SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT.**

### **5.8 Rolling Substitutions**

All teams are entitled to unlimited rolling substitutions with the below to be adhered to:

After the Player Interchanges have been made no other replacements, substitutions or Player Interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a Player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less Player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row Player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.

If a team opts to go to uncontested scrums, they will not later be allowed to return to contested scrummaging.

- For the avoidance of doubt, Player Interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that if a Player has uncontrolled active bleeding and thus has to leave the field, this will not be classified as a Player Interchange if another Player replaces that Player. If a team has used all of its Player Interchanges, that Player may be replaced and the team shall continue. The Player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- Not more than three Player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and in all cases with the permission of the Referee.
- A Player must enter the field of play on the halfway line.
- A Player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that Player took to the field of play.
- A Player who is previously injured in the match shall not return to play as a Player Interchange.
- In addition to the powers set out in the Laws of the Game, Referees are entitled in their sole opinion to prohibit or postpone a Player Interchange if they believe either that the Player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly or where the replacement Player is not fit to continue playing in the match.
- Any player leaving the field of play with suspected concussion is not allowed to return to the field of play.
- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions Regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game these Regulations shall take precedence.

## **6. Entry Conditions**

All Clubs participating in the National League shall comply with:

- a. these National League Rules;
- b. the Union’s Memorandum of Association and the Articles;
- c. the Regulations and Resolutions of the Board of Directors of the Union;
- d. the World Rugby Bye Laws, Resolutions and Regulations relating to the Game, and
- e. the Laws of the Game.



## 7. Responsibility for Organisation

All matches in every Division of the National League will be under the control of the Union. The Competitions Management Committee will deal with all matters relating to every Division of the National League.

## 8. General Rules (refer to attached Guidance Document)

All National League matches must be played and each Club must complete its National League programme. In the event that a National League match is not played the matter will be reported to the Competitions Management Committee who will establish why the match was not played. Where a match does not take place, it is the responsibility of the Honorary Secretary or Fixture Secretary of each Club to notify the Union's Regulatory & Competitions Manager, in writing, within 24 hours of the reason(s) for the postponement (with supporting evidence if necessary). It is also the responsibility of the home side to make every effort to notify the appointed match official of the game not taking place. If the Competitions Management Committee is not satisfied with the explanation of the Club concerned it has the ability to apply a 2-point deduction. Other sanctions available to the Competitions Management Committee include (but are not limited to) the deduction of League points, the imposition of a fine, expunging the Club's League points total and/or expulsion from the National League.

### a. Passive scrums

#### i) For all divisions other than the Premier Division

No match may be postponed because of the lack of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards. The match must be played on the due date with uncontested scrums. If prior to any match a Club becomes aware that it will be unable to field for that match a sufficient number of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, notify the opposing club and match officials that it will elect to take uncontested scrums during the match. Following the match, the Competitions Management Committee may consider the conduct of the Club and the reason for uncontested scrums and whether any sanction should be applied. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, it must continue to have 8 players committed to each scrum in relation to point 5.7.f. In addition, only the player in the scrum half position may play the ball from the scrum. For the avoidance of doubt the ball may not be played by the player in number 8 position within the scrum.

The team electing to go passive will be required to then continue with 14 players.

### b. Declaration of winners.

Winners of National League matches will be teams which have scored the greater number of points at the end of each match. For the avoidance of doubt and in compliance with the Laws of the Game (Law 6.A.12), the Referee will be the final arbiter as to the score of each National League match. National League points shall be awarded as follows:

Win	-	4 points
Draw	-	2 points
Defeat	-	0 points
Bonus Points	-	1 point for a team scoring 4 or more tries
		1 point for a team losing by 7 points or less

- c. **National League placings** will be decided on the basis of League points gained during the season. Where teams have gained equal numbers of League points, the team with the most wins shall be given preference. If the number of wins is equal, the team with the fewest losses shall be given preference. If the number of losses is equal then the Club having recorded the most tries in the Season shall be given preference. If the number of tries is equal the points 'for' shall be divided by the points 'against' and the team with the highest factor shall be declared to have the better record.
- d. **Duration of play** – 80 minutes each match (40 minutes each half) plus any time permitted by the Match Official for delays (Laws of the Game – Law 5). At half time, an interval of not more than 10 minutes is allowed. If starting numbers are reduced to 12, 13 or 14 due to available players then the match will be 70 minutes duration (35 minutes per half)
- e. **Fixture Arrangements.** National League matches must be played on the dates allocated unless otherwise previously agreed by the Competitions Management Committee. These will be decided by the Competitions Management Committee and circulated to Clubs as soon as practicable. The match will take place on the home Club's first pitch or on a suitable alternative.
- f. **Notification of Results.** The appointed Match Official will notify the Union of the result of each match by submitting the match result card electronically within 1 hour of the match taking place via the match official app. The appointed Match Official will also submit by e-mail team lists, which must be completed by officials from each team and handed to the match official prior to the kick-off.
- g. **Postponed, rearranged, and abandoned matches**
- i) Postponed or Mutually Rearranged National League matches must be played on the allocated dates unless a match is postponed because of ground or weather conditions, or the Clubs concerned have mutually agreed to the postponement and have received the prior consent of the Union to its rearrangement.

For a mutually agreed fixture the Club Secretary or Club Fixture Secretary of both clubs **MUST** inform the Competitions Manager in writing no later than 24 hours prior to the fixture so the postponement can be granted by the Union.

Both Clubs must copy each other into the email correspondence to confirm the mutual agreement.

Failure to produce the written evidence of a mutual agreement could result in the offending club being deducted 2 points.

Consent to postpone fixtures in other such circumstances will not be given if sought less than 2 months prior to the fixture. (i.e. Weddings/Special Occasions) Where both Clubs have received the consent of the Union to postpone a fixture, then that fixture must be played, where practicable, within 21 days of the postponement.

If the Clubs cannot agree on an alternative date within 14 days of a postponement due to weather conditions the Union will determine the date of the rearranged fixture which will be the next available Saturday for both Clubs during the season, with this not being subject to appeal by clubs unless a mutual agreement is reached on a rearranged date.

Fixtures that are unable to be rearranged for an available Sunday will automatically be set by the Regulatory & Competitions Manager to take place midweek following Daylight Savings Time which is March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

If the ground of the home Club is not fit because of weather or ground conditions or is unavailable for any other reason and the away fixture has not yet been played, Clubs should endeavour to switch the venue to the Away Club so that the fixture is played on that date.

Both Clubs must notify the Union's Fixture and Registrations Co-ordinator, in writing, of the new fixture date at least four working days prior to the match being played. This timeline may be reduced in exceptional circumstances subject to the agreement of both Clubs and the availability of a suitably qualified referee.

Each Club must notify the Fixture & Registrations Co-Ordinator in writing of the postponement or rearrangement of any fixture. If this written notification is not received the match will be deemed to be an unfulfilled fixture and the appropriate sanctions may be applied.

Any dispute in respect of such cancellation, postponement or rearrangement shall be referred to the Competitions Management Committee for determination.

When ground or weather conditions demand, and if requested to do so, an opportunity **must** be given to an official representative of the visiting Club, a Union Match Official living locally of similar standing to the appointed Match Official or an Officer of the Union to view the situation in sufficient time to allow matches to be postponed preventing unnecessary travelling. Clubs are recommended to undertake ground inspections no earlier than one hour before the scheduled kick off time except in cases where an earlier inspection is required to prevent an Away Club undertaking a long journey or in cases where the Match Official is travelling from a long distance. **Should the Clubs disagree on the condition of the ground, the match will not be played and the match will be rescheduled.** The Match Official appointed by the Union will report on the matter and that report will be considered by the Competitions Management Committee.

All matches must be played on the set dates except in the case of postponement because of adverse ground or weather conditions and/or requests from the appointed Broadcasters.

(ii) Abandoned Matches

All matches must be played to full time. The Match Official is to be the sole judge of the amount of time played. If a match is abandoned, then both Clubs' Honorary Secretaries or Fixture Secretaries must separately notify the Union of the fact in writing no later than 48 hours following the

abandonment. Should there be any disputes, the CMC will have the discretion to confirm the result of the game regardless of score.

Should the difference in score be 30 or more points then the result of the fixture shall stand and be submitted including try count and there will be no requirement for a rearrangement. This is regardless of whether both teams agree or not.

If the difference in score is 29 points or less and if both Clubs agree then the Competitions Management Committee may permit the score, at the time of the abandonment, to stand. However, if both teams are not in agreement, then the match is to be replayed. The WRU has the discretion to make decisions in relation to the result of each respective tie in the interest of fairness and integrity of the Competition.

Where such an abandoned match is to be replayed, the match will be played at the original venue or at a venue determined by the home Club. Any National League fixture which has been abandoned and is required to be played again must be rearranged by the Clubs and the date of the rearrangement notified to the Union's Fixture and Registrations Co-ordinator no later than 21 days of the original date. If details of the rearrangement are not supplied by the due date, then the Union will determine the date on which the rearranged fixture will be played. Both Clubs must notify the Union's Fixture and Competitions Manager in writing, of the new fixture date no later than four working days prior to the match being played. This timeline may be reduced in exceptional circumstances, subject to the mutual agreement of both Clubs and the availability of a suitably qualified referee.

h. Protests and Disputes

- (i) Save for matters which fall to be determined in accordance with the Union's Disciplinary Regulations, the Competition Management Committee shall be responsible for and have discretion in dealing with any protest or dispute arising out of the National League or these National League Rules (which shall include those relating to the application of the Premier Division Criteria). Any such protest or dispute must be made by a Club in writing to the Union's Administration Manager and accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be refunded. No protest or dispute relating to matches played in the Competition will be considered if made more than **48 hours** after the end of the relevant match has taken place. The Competitions Management Committee shall have discretion to investigate any breach of these National League Rules at any time and to take such action as it shall deem appropriate. The Club who the appeal is made against will also be informed of the decision to do so by the Union once it has been agreed to hear the appeal.
- (ii) Any Club that wishes to appeal a decision of the Competitions Management Committee made pursuant to these National League Rules may do so to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors, which may include the appointment of a legally qualified independent Chair, provided that the Club's appeal is lodged in writing, with the Union's Competitions Manager no later than 48 hours of the Competitions Management Committee's

decision being notified to it, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be returned. If the decision is given orally, the period of 48 hours shall run from the date of the oral decision but otherwise shall run from the date of receipt of the decision in writing by the Honorary Secretary of the Club. Please note that there is no obligation of the WRU or Competitions Management Committee to appoint a legally qualified independent Chair.

- (iii) In carrying out their functions pursuant to these National League Rules, the Competitions Management Committee and any appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors of the Union pursuant to Rule 8i(ii) shall have the power to regulate their own procedure in respect of the matters which fall to be considered by them.
- (iv) It should be borne in mind that the bodies dealing with any protest or dispute, to include an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors, are not courts of law and are disciplinary, rather than arbitral, bodies. A member of the Competitions Management Committee will be entitled to attend any appeal to provide the rationale for the original decision taken. The representative of the Competitions Management Committee will not be a voting member at the appeal.

When cases of an urgent nature occur then the Chair of the Competitions Committee, in consultation with the Competition Secretary and Female Lead, shall have absolute discretion to deal with these cases. Decisions made by the Chair and the League Secretary in such cases shall be binding.

Please be aware of the WRU Disciplinary Regulations to remind players, coaches and spectators of their conduct and behaviour for all matches. Please be aware that should the Disciplinary Regulations not be adhered to then Club's may be subject to sanctions such as points deductions.

i. Penalties

- (i) The Competitions Management Committee may apply any appropriate sanction it deems fit to any Club without limitation, found to be in default, or failing to comply with these National League Rules.
- (ii) Where any Club has been found to have included an ineligible player (that is, a player who is not registered with a Club or granted a permit or is dual registered or a player whose name does not appear on the team sheet submitted by the Club in a National League match), the Competitions Management Committee shall have the power to penalise the offending Club further by the loss of League points and scores it may have accrued during the match and expunge the result from the League table.

Before action is taken under Rules i(i) or (ii), the Club will be offered the benefits of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Union.

- (iii) An official representative of both home and visiting teams will submit an electronic team sheet prior to the kick-off. Only those players named on this list will be eligible to play in the match. An official representative of each Club has the right to examine their opponent's team list before and immediately after the match. A Club wishing to make an objection will bring it to the notice of the Match Official who will record the same. The Club raising the objection will bring it to the notice of the Union's Competitions Manager no later than 48 hours after the end of the relevant match taking place, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may, or may not be returned.

j. Match Officials

Match Officials shall be appointed by the Union for all National League matches.

k. Kick Off

The kick-off time for National League matches shall be in accordance with the Union's Resolution 15, however, it is recommended that it is standardised at 2.30pm for Sunday matches in all Divisions. Clubs may agree a different kick-off time to that specified by the Union and shall request the Union's prior approval of the same which will usually be no later than seven days prior to the date of the relevant match. Where League fixtures are scheduled to be played on the day of an international rugby union match in which the Senior Women's Welsh National Team is participating, Clubs may agree a different kick-off time to that specified by the Union and shall request the Union's prior approval of the same which will usually be no later than seven days prior to the date of the relevant match.

**In the event that a relevant fixture does not take place on the date and at the time allocated to it by the Union then the Club responsible for the default may be subject to such fines and other punishments as the Competitions Management Committee consider just and equitable having regard to all the circumstances of the case.**

Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the Club concerned to the lowest Division and promoting such other Club(s) as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.

The fact that a National League Fixture is a relevant fixture shall be deemed to be an aggravating factor

A Club which fails to complete a relevant fixture and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

l. Competitions Management Committee of the WRU

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to adapt any area contained within these regulations to ensure the integrity of the competition is maintained and the competition is concluded in a clear, fair, and equitable manner.

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to suspend any sanction contained within these League rules should they deem it necessary and appropriate.

# APPENDIX 1

## Welsh Rugby Union Gender Participation Risk Assessment Form

# WRU GENDER PARTICIPATION RISK ASSESSMENT FORM



This risk assessment form can be used to review and identify an individual's physical development, technical ability, and rugby competency.

This evidence should be used to determine if the individual is competent and confident both physically and from a rugby skill level to participate at an appropriate level, that is competitive and comparable to their team-mates/opposition. An appropriately qualified coach who has experience in coaching rugby union at the level in which the player is proposing to participate should complete this risk assessment.

## ASSESSMENT FORM

Players Name:

Assessors Name: (appropriately qualified coach)

Dates of Assessment:

Venue of Assessment:

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Is the player's rugby experience appropriate to compete fairly and safely at a comparable level to their team-mates/opposition?

### Competency

Rugby background:  
Amount of rugby hours, how much rugby training and playing experience do they have:

### Comments

Number of years rugby playing experience:

Please provide details of other sports experience, to include time period, different environments/sports, and levels:

Position(s) previously played (if applicable):

Proposed Playing position(s):





## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Does the player's level of physical development and/or fitness allow the player to compete fairly and safely at a comparable level to their team-mates/opposition?

### Competency

Physical development/presence and athletic ability

The player's physical development and presence does not present an unfair competitive advantage or deficit to either themselves or others

### Comments

## RUGBY ABILITY / SKILL

Does the player's rugby ability and skills allow the player to compete fairly and safely at a comparable level to their team-mates/opposition?

### Competency

Tackle competency / Safe and competent tackle technique / Safe and appropriate body position and point of contact

Breakdown contest / Safe and competent in the ruck / Safe and competent technique in the maul

Set piece ability (e.g., scrum/ lineout). If applicable based on playing position. State position/role (e.g., front row, lifter). / Safe and competent scrummager (attack and defence). / Safe and competent lifting technique in the lineout (attack and defence).

General Rugby Skill/Ability (e.g., catch & pass, evasion skills, kicking) / Rugby specific skill competency allow the player to participate safely

### Comments



## RUGBY CONFIDENCE / MIND-SET

Is the player's rugby confidence/mind-set aligned to their ability/skill-set and are they able to compete fairly and safely at a comparable level to their team-mates/opposition?

### Comments

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Based on the observation, is the player deemed competent and able to participate safely and at a comparable level to their team-mates/opposition?

Yes       No

Signed by Coach:

Date:



# APPENDIX 2

## FAQs



# **GENDER PARTICIPATION POLICY**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Participation of Transgender and Non Binary Players in accordance  
with the WRU Competition Regulations / WRU Pathway

## Why do we need to review the current policy?

The previous World Rugby Transgender Policy was approved in March 2019, and this policy was adopted by the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU). In 2020 a review of that policy was conducted to recognise the importance of exploring a rugby-specific framework for all by prioritising the welfare of athletes, inclusion and fairness. The review focussed upon three key points

- Agreement on key issues of physiological basis of performance differences between men and women
- Further consultation and research required, particularly in the areas of specific injury risk, ethical considerations and performance
- Commitment from World Rugby to explore further research to inform future guideline revision

In October 2020, World Rugby published their updated transgender participation guidelines following a comprehensive, collaborative and transparent review of its existing guidance.

As a result, the new guidelines deemed trans women ineligible to play women's contact rugby on safety grounds at the international level of the game where size, strength, power and speed are crucial for both risk and performance, but this did not preclude national unions from flexibility in their application of the guidelines at the domestic/community level of the game. Trans men are permitted to continue participating in men's contact rugby.

## How did the WRU policy review work?

The WRU consulted extensively with stakeholders within the game in September 2020, and then provided feedback to World Rugby and endorsed the guidelines published by World Rugby but made the following recommendations

- The WRU feel that the current policy should be updated, with greater emphasis on safety of all players.
- As a result, the WRU support the implementation of the proposed World Rugby Transgender Guidelines at the international and professional levels of the game, where the research undertaken to date is more relevant.
- The alignment of the pathway from community rugby to professional and ultimately international honours will need to be considered further.
- Further consideration is required within Wales as to whether the proposed Guidelines are appropriate at community level, whilst at all times prioritising player welfare and safety.

The WRU then embarked on developing a domestic policy, and worked in consultation with other rugby union national governing bodies and partners, including Sport Wales and the Sports Council Equality Group.

The WRU reviewed and considered the current research that is available, and also monitored the media coverage around transgender participation in sport.



The WRU also worked in consultation with the RFU, SRU and IRFU in developing a draft domestic policy, and considered a variety of options, including dealing with matters on a case-by-case basis.

The WRU have also been supported by Sport Wales in the development of this policy, and attended a number of training events with Sport Wales and the Sports Council Equality Group.

In September 2021 the UK Sports Councils' Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport was published. The guidance concluded that the inclusion of transgender people into female sport could not be balanced regarding transgender inclusion, fairness and safety in gender-affected sport where there is meaningful competition. Based on the fact that rugby is also a collision sport has meant that it is considered to be at the far end of the scale in terms of safety and risk.

In November 2021 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) released their Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations.

When issuing this Framework, the IOC recognised that it should be within the remit of each sport and its governing body to determine how an athlete may be at a disproportionate advantage compared with their peers, taking into consideration the nature of each sport. On that basis the IOC decided that they were now not able to issue regulations that define eligibility criteria for every sport.

The WRU developed a draft policy, and briefed the Community Game Board in June 2022.

The draft policy was then presented to the WRU Policy Review Group, who were an independent panel with responsibility to -

- remain impartial and independent in any considerations
- provide external scrutiny and quality assurance, through a player focussed review process to consider the differing aspects of safety, fairness and inclusion.
- undertake the effective review and analysis of all relevant information that has been gathered as part of the policy development process
- consider the current research
- provide their advice and guidance in relation to the compilation of the policy

The WRU then presented the draft policy to the WRU Board for approval in September 2022.



## What did the consultation find?

Rugby union is always considered to be a game for all, with players of different abilities, capabilities, shape and size, participating within it, particularly in the Community Game. In Wales, the game is categorised by age and then within the senior game, it is categorised into Male and Female competitions.

Whilst this was debated in full, it was recognised that safety and player welfare were key factors that should be considered. However, there was also a contradictory view taken by some, that inclusion should be the priority, and there was a recognition and commitment to ensure that rugby remained inclusive as a sport.

During our consultation process there appeared to be a perceived devaluation of the Women's game and the impact of permitting trans players to participate has on the game. There were very strong opinions voiced in this area, but it was not a unanimous viewpoint.

From existing, current female players perspective, there were real concerns in respect of player safety, specifically around physicality, bone density, and physiological advantages in having transitioned post male puberty.

The consultation included discussions around both participation and performance, including whether a separate approach should be explored for the International/Professional game compared to the Community game.

The WRU explored all potential options to consider the needs of trans players, and consider inclusion, fairness and safety.

## Who were involved in the Review process?

The WRU engaged with a number of stakeholders, and liaised closely with other rugby governing bodies, Sport Wales and the Sports Councils Equality Group.

Those engaged during the consultation process were a mix of individuals, organisational representatives, current and former players, rugby volunteers, people from the LGBTQ+ community, and women's groups.

## What did the Review Conclude in relation to transgender women playing rugby in Wales?

It highlighted that there were concerns relating to safety and fairness regarding transgender women playing in women's contact rugby in Wales. There was also an appreciation that alternative options should be considered, so that transgender women could participate in other formats of the game.

The current evidence indicates that males have numerous physical advantages in sport compared with females, and this is recognised in law in 'gender-affected sport'. Current research indicates that testosterone suppression does not negate this physical advantage over females and so cannot guarantee competitive fairness and/or safety.



## What did the Review Conclude in relation to transgender men playing rugby in Wales?

The review highlighted that with appropriate safeguards in place, that transgender men could play in men's contact rugby in Wales. The following safeguards would ensure that any player welfare concerns were appropriately managed -

- an appropriate risk assessment is carried out by the club or school and is recorded on the form approved by the WRU;
- they acknowledge, understand and accept the associated risks of playing contact rugby in the male category of rugby, and
- the WRU is notified prior to the player participating in the contact rugby activity

## What is a gender-affected sport?

A gender-affected activity is a sport, game or other activity of a competitive nature in circumstances in which the physical strength, stamina or physique of average persons of one sex would put them at a disadvantage compared with average persons of the other sex as competitors in events involving the activity.

## Safety, Inclusion and Fairness

We accept that different people have a different understanding of what the terms 'inclusion', 'fairness' and 'safety' mean. For the purposes of this work, we are using 'inclusion' to mean the inclusion of transgender people into the category of their choice. 'Fairness' means competitive equity in relation to the sex category, and as defined within the Equality Act in relation to strength, stamina and physique in gender-affected sport. 'Safety', which is also referenced in the Equality Act, refers to safety from the risk of injury.

The WRU review concluded that transgender inclusion, fairness and safety cannot be balanced in gender-affected sport, but rather need to be prioritised across different options available to each sport.

The Sports Council Equality Group guidance provided content and a framework for sports to make decisions and set out some of the options a sport might consider, from prioritising transgender inclusion, or protecting the female category, and to additionally introducing universal admission to alternative formats of the game.

## What science is this based on?

The World Rugby and Sports Councils' reviews explored and considered the most up to date peer-reviewed and published studies. The WRU are committed to reviewing the guidance regularly to ensure it aligns with the latest research and recommendations.





## **Are you confident the research this is based on is robust?**

The research this is based upon has been peer-reviewed and is publicly available, and as outlined above we acknowledge that this is an evolving issue, and we will continue to review all available information as it emerges.

<https://www.world.rugby/the-game/player-welfare/guidelines/transgender/women#Assessmentofresearchlimitationsandimplications>

## **What does this mean for transgender people already taking part in Welsh Rugby?**

The WRU is committed to being as inclusive as possible, and providing opportunities for everyone to participate in Welsh Rugby. We will work closely and speak with those who are currently participating as part of any assessment that may be conducted.

## **Why can't trans women play contact rugby?**

Rugby Union is a gender affected sport, with defined sex categories. It is also a collision sport, so the risk of injury is higher in comparison with non- contact sports.

We are committed to inclusion, but player welfare is our primary consideration. Based on the evidence currently provided, there is significant retained physiological advantage if a trans woman has transitioned post male puberty.

## **What are those significant physiological advantages?**

We currently have categories that are based on sex and not gender, due to the physiological advantages that males who have experienced male puberty. Research provided by World Rugby indicates that there is a 30-60 % difference in strength between male and females, and a 33% difference in power.

There are also other categories in sport where eligibility is determined to provide safety and/or fairness as well as inclusion, such as competitions which are age restricted, or classifications in disability sport.



## **Why can't the Welsh Rugby Union make eligibility decisions regarding trans women on a case-by-case basis?**

It has not been scientifically validated as to whether any parameters of physical capacity or ability can be defined with a certain cut-off point at which someone is considered appropriately 'female' or appropriately 'male'.

Many tests related to sports performance are volitional. This means a person must try their very best to get an appropriate measurement. It is difficult to foresee how someone could be expected to provide maximal effort when a positive outcome for them relies on achieving a lesser result.

Panel members are unlikely to be able to manage a situation in which their decisions can determine the suitability of some individuals, and not others. In the absence of a scientific rationale this places the panel members in a difficult situation.

Case-by-case analysis may fall outside of the provisions of the Equality Act (whereby provision is for average advantage not individual advantage) and may be based on criteria which cannot be lawfully justified. Some transgender people will be included, some will be excluded through criteria outside of their own control.

## **Are you committed to inclusion within Welsh Rugby?**

We are committed to inclusion, and our belief is that that everyone should have the opportunity to access sport and physical activity. Based on the evidence that is currently available, it is not possible to achieve an equal balance between transgender inclusion, fairness and safety, particularly in female sport.

## **How are you supporting individuals and clubs?**

We recognise the importance of inclusion, and how we can best support inclusion for everyone in our sport.

We are engaging with individuals and clubs to ensure that we support transgender players and provide the opportunity for trans men to participate in men's contact rugby, and trans women to participate in alternative non-contact formats of the game.

We are actively working with partners to develop playing and volunteering opportunities for trans women, and also provide support to coaches, players and other club volunteers who may be supporting a transgender player in their club.

