

The Football Association Women's Pyramid of Football Ground Grading Document

Grading Category – A

1. GROUND

The ground must give an overall appearance and impression of being a football ground that would be of suitable quality for the highest levels of the Women's Pyramid of Football in England.

It must be possible for spectators to view the match, either standing or seated, for the full length of at least 3 sides of the playing area. Where one side is designated as spectator-free, measures must be in place to ensure there is no unauthorised access.

The location of the ground, in so far as its relation to the conurbation whose name the club bears, or is traditionally associated with, must meet with the approval of both The Football Association and The FA WSL Board Sub Group or The FA WSL Management Committee of which it is in membership.

The club must disclose plans and details of any proposed future move to a new stadium to both the league of which it is in membership and The Football Association.

1.1 Security of Tenure

Where a club does not own the freehold of their ground then evidence of adequate security of tenure in accordance with any relevant league licence must be provided.

1.2 Boundary of Ground

The ground must be enclosed by a permanent boundary, which will prevent individuals from viewing the game from outside the ground. The boundary must be of sound construction, such as cast concrete, brick, breezeblock or metal cladding with steel or concrete posts and be of a minimum height of 1.83 metres as measured from outside the ground.

Lapped timber, latch panel wood fences and wire mesh fences with wooden posts may be acceptable. Hedges, shrubs and/or trees will not normally be accepted.

Where any side of the ground is bounded by private land/property, the fixed boundary of that private land / property may be acceptable as the boundary of the ground

1.3 Capacity

The ground must have a minimum safe capacity of 1,950 calculated by a competent person in accordance with the guidance given in the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. There must also be potential to increase the capacity in the future.

1.4 Club House

There must be a clubhouse facility either on or adjacent to the ground and which should be open on match days to provide refreshments to spectators and visiting Players, Officials and Match Officials, unless provided for elsewhere in the Ground.

1.5 Car Parking

There should be adequate car parking facilities on or near-by to the ground. Car parking within the boundary of the ground may not be acceptable.

1.6 Pitch Perimeter Barrier

Subject to the provisions detailed below, there must be a permanent fixed barrier ideally 1.1 m high as measured from the spectator side, of sound construction (e.g. concrete and steel) and free from all sharp edges, surrounding the pitch on all sides that may be occupied by spectators. Existing barriers/rails not at 1.1m high may be acceptable, provided they meet the requirements set out in this clause.

The barrier, if other than solid wall type of construction, may be infilled so that the ball cannot pass through or under it. Advertising boards may be an acceptable means of infill.

There must be a minimum of 1.83 metres between the touchline, goal line and the pitch perimeter barrier. A barrier need not be erected on any side not open to the public.

Immediately in front of an area of seated accommodation the boundary of the playing area may be indicated by means other than a permanent fixed barrier, provided that the Club is able to provide assurances that no spectator will be allowed to stand in this area to watch the match.

Where there is a walkway in front of a standing terrace which is itself fronted by a crush barrier that has been subject to an annual risk assessment and, if necessary, tested, an alternative to a fixed barrier (e.g. A-frames) may be used, provided no spectators are allowed to stand in this area to watch the match. The Club must implement a safety management system to ensure this and also to protect the integrity of the playing area.

It is important to distinguish between a pitch perimeter barrier/rail, which exists to separate spectators from the playing area and a crush barrier, which has been constructed and tested according to the requirements of the Green Guide. Where the structure cannot be designated as a crush barrier, e.g. its height exceeds 1.1m, the maximum depth of standing behind it is limited to 1.5m and this must be borne in mind in any capacity calculations.

It is recognised that the above may not be an issue for normal attendances but, when a larger crowd is anticipated, the Club should be mindful of the associated management issues and, if necessary, take professional advice.

Whatever system is employed, a club should be mindful of its responsibility to ensure spectator safety and minimise the possibility of unauthorised incursions on to the playing area.

NB where A-frames are utilised instead of a fixed barrier, they must be continuous.

1.7 Pitch Standards

The playing surface will be grass, unless otherwise authorised by the FA WSL League Management Committee, and must be of a high standard, meeting the Standard criteria as set out in the FA Performance Quality Standard (PQS) for natural grass pitches (Appendix A). It must be level and free from surface depressions and excessive undulations.

Please note that to meet the PQS a pitch should not accommodate more than 60 games per calendar year.

The maximum slope allowable shall not exceed an even gradient of vertical to horizontal 1 : 41 in any direction.

The playing surface must be maintained to the highest possible standards.

Third Generation Artificial Football Turf pitches will be permitted, with prior consent of the FA WSL Management Committee, provided that the artificial turf meets the following conditions:

The pitch shall:

- a be surfaced with an artificial grass surface that has laboratory type approval in accordance with the FIFA Quality Concept *Handbook of Requirements for Football Turf* Two Star Category;
- or be surfaced with an artificial grass surface that has laboratory type approval in accordance with the FIFA Quality Concept *Handbook of Requirements for Football Turf* One Star Category or the *International Artificial Turf Standard* and satisfies the skin friction and skin abrasion requirements of the FIFA Quality Concept *Handbook of Requirements for Football Turf*.
- b have satisfied the required performance and construction requirements at the time of its last annual assessment.

The artificial grass pitch, including run-offs, shall be one continuous playing surface. It shall be green in colour. Pitch markings shall be white and in accordance with the Laws of Association Football but other lines maybe permitted providing they are a different colour.

Where an artificial surface is installed, the Performance Test must be completed by no later than 28th January each year and the **result and details** submitted to the league by 28th February. Tests shall be under taken in the six positions specified in the FIFA *Handbook of Test Methods for Football Turf* by FIFA accredited laboratories. **Any remedial work must be carried out prior to the season commencement and the pass Performance Test Certificate submitted to the League by 30th April.**

The home Club shall allow their opposition the opportunity to use the pitch and train on the surface two hours prior to the kick-off and there must not be another game or event on the pitch following the training period. If it is intended to water the pitch before the match the pitch shall also be watered prior to the training period.

The Club using the artificial grass pitch shall advise their opponents at least 10 days before the match of limitations or recommendations on the types of boot or stud that may be used on the surface.

1.8 Playing Area

The playing area to be a minimum of 100 metres by 64 metres (110 yards x 70 yards) and should conform to the requirements of the Laws of the Game.

Goal posts and goal net supports should be of professional manufacture and conform to the current safety requirements and to the requirements of the Laws of the Game.

NB Reference should be made to the Goalpost Safety information published by The Football Association and, in particular, it should be noted that the use of metal cup hooks is prohibited.

1.9 Technical Area

Two covered trainers' boxes clearly marked "Home" and "Away or Visitors" must be provided unless adequate provision is made in a seated stand. They **must** be on the same side of the pitch ideally either side of the halfway line, ideally both equidistant from it and ideally a minimum of 3 metres apart and provide an unobstructed view of the playing area.

Each box must be able to accommodate 8 persons under cover on fixed seats or benches. Where bench seating is provided, a minimum of 0.5m must be allowed for each person (i.e. 8 persons require a minimum of 4 metres.).

Portable trainers' boxes are permitted and must be securely fixed when in use.

A Technical Area, as defined within the Laws of the Game should be marked out round each trainer's box.

NB When new boxes are being constructed or installed, they must be able to accommodate a minimum of 11 persons, must be on each side of the half way line, equidistant from it and a minimum of 3 metres apart.

1.10 Secure Walkway

There must be a safe, unimpeded passage for players and match officials between the dressing rooms and the pitch.

The use of protection designed products such as permanent structures or retractable tunnels to separate spectators and players/officials is recommended.

The design of the safe walkway will inevitably differ from ground to ground and it will rarely guarantee the safe passage of players and match officials unless supplemented by stewards. A club should implement procedures appropriate to the particular structure and be ready to respond to on the field situations that might affect spectator behaviour.

1.11 Floodlighting and Lighting

Floodlights must be provided to an average lux reading of at least 120. No single reading can be less than one quarter of the highest reading so as to ensure an even spread of light.

Readings shall be on a grid of 88 markings (8 across, 11 down) evenly spaced with the outside readings falling on the pitch boundary line. The average of all the readings is taken to be the average illumination level in lux of the floodlighting installation.

The lux values must be tested every two years in accordance with current guidelines by an approved independent contractor. Floodlights must be retested after any significant alterations. Existing certification will be accepted provided that the test was carried out within the last two years unless work has been carried out at the ground, which may have affected previous readings.

An "approved" contractor is one that is in possession of the NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) Approved Contractors' award or ISO 9000/BS 5750 (International Standards Organisation/British Standard) or is a member of the Electrical Contractors' Association.

The contractor must, when detailing the lux values, give confirmation in writing of the date when the illumination test equipment used was last calibrated.

When new or improved installations are being planned, an average lux reading of at least 180 must be provided.

Clubs are reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure the safety of spectators entering, leaving and moving about the ground and, if a ground is used in non-daylight hours, adequate artificial lighting should be provided. Further, consideration must be given by a club to its procedures in the event of a power failure.

1.12 Public Address System

A public address system must be provided with adequate output to convey information to all spectator areas.

1.13 Entrances

There should be at least 3 spectator entrances to control the ingress of spectators. These must be controlled by fully operational turnstiles of the revolving type and must be suitably housed and lit. Adequate protection **and security** for the turnstile operator must be incorporated. These entrances should be placed in appropriate positions around the boundary of the ground and take into account the requirements of segregation.

It must be possible to gain access to the spectator viewing areas from the turnstiles via a bound surface to a minimum width of 0.9 metres.

1.14 Exits

The location and number of ground exits must be approved by a competent person and comply with the requirements of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds.

There must be access via a bound surface to all exits from the nearest spectator viewing areas.

All exits must be clearly signed, ideally with “running man” signs, and are to be kept clear and free from obstructions.

1.15 Emergency Access

Access must be provided for the emergency services and maintained free from obstruction.

1.16 Scaffold Tower for Broadcast Camera

If the ground does not have an adequate camera gantry, there should be one semi-permanent scaffold tower for broadcast purposes> This will accommodate one camera and two operators, the dimensions to be approximately W2.40m x L2.40m x H3.60m and in a location specifically agreed with The FA as appropriate for the specific ground. The FA will arrange for health and safety checks of this tower to meet all necessary health and safety and broadcast requirements.

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES

2.1 Spectator Accommodation

Development, in addition to hard standing, must be on more than one side of the ground.

Covered accommodation, which should preferably be on 2 sides of the ground, must be of sound construction of timber/steel/brick/concrete or any combination of these materials. Existing timber stands are only acceptable subject to a fire risk assessment conducted by a competent person.

The minimum covered accommodation must be 500, of which at least 250 must be seated. These 250 seats, in not more than 2 stands, may be inclusive of Directors/Committee and press seating. No stand may have less than 50 seats.

Individual tip up seats with backrests are preferred. Whilst individual seats are preferred, existing bench seating may be permitted provided that it is in good repair and that individual spaces (min 500mm) are clearly marked.

All seating must afford a good view of the pitch and be clean, functional and in good condition.

There must be a minimum of 24 seats provided for Directors/Committee and guests with a minimum of 12 seats provided for the visiting club. These seats must be clearly marked "Home" and "Away Directors" **and should enjoy a prime position in the main stand.**

Additional seating may be provided in other areas of the ground. However, these seats are not to be classed as being "in lieu" of the number shown above.

Standing spectators are not allowed in or near a seated spectator stand where they can obstruct views. Areas where no spectators are permitted to stand must be clearly marked with yellow-hatched markings.

Hard standing to a minimum width of 0.9 metre, measured from the spectator side of the pitch perimeter barrier, must be provided on all 4 sides of the ground, unless a different configuration exists (see paragraph 1). The surface must be of a bound material.

2.2 Press Seating

A minimum of 4 seats must be provided with lighting and writing facilities for use by the press and other media. **The press seating must have a clear view of the field of play.**

2.3 Terracing

Where terracing is provided, it must comply with the requirements of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. All terracing must be in a sound condition. Terracing that is crumbling, has grass / weeds growing through it or has broken or loose concrete will not be accepted.

Any level surface within the ground should ideally be hard standing, such as tarmac, concrete, concrete paving or other approved materials which create a bound surface. However, flat and well maintained grassed areas may be accepted, provided the width between the hard standing (when measured from the edge farther away from the perimeter barrier) and the boundary fence does not exceed 20 metres.

Spectator access must be denied to any grass banking so that it cannot be used for viewing the match.

2.4 Toilets

Toilets must be located within the ground and must be accessible both to male and to female spectators. Such toilets need not be in a dedicated toilet block, provided access from the ground is immediate and they cannot be accessed for the duration of the match by persons using the clubhouse or any adjacent facility. (On no account may access be through licensed premises.)

The following minimum toilet facilities must be provided in total, excluding those located in any clubhouse:

Male:	2 urinals or equivalent and 1 WC
Female:	2 WCs

In addition, wash hand basins with running water, warm air hand driers and/or paper towel dispenser with towels and waste paper bins must be provided in each toilet area. Whilst

replaceable linen roller towels in a cabinet are acceptable, individual hand towels are not permitted.

All toilet areas must be in working order, with a roof and operational lighting, supplied with toilet paper and maintained to a high level of cleanliness.

These facilities may be of the temporary or mobile type but must be connected to the mains supply. They must be fully accessible with permanent access.

The location of all toilet facilities must be **indicated with appropriate signage**.

2.5 Refreshment Facilities

2.5.1 Directors/Committee/Guests

A separate room must be made available in which refreshments for Directors/Committee and guests can be served. This area must be able to accommodate a minimum of 24 persons with nearby toilet facilities.

2.5.2 Ground Refreshment Facilities

Refreshment facilities must be provided in each separate area of the ground. These facilities may be of a temporary or mobile type.

2.6 Disabled Facilities

A club must take full account of the needs of disabled spectators and be mindful of its obligations under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Reference may be made to the publications / data sheets issued by both The Football Association and the Football Foundation.

No specific requirement is currently included in the ground grading criteria but The Football Association strongly recommends that access is provided to both a covered viewing area and toilet and refreshment facilities.

2.7 Segregation

When segregation is in operation, there must be adequate toilet facilities and refreshment facilities in each segregated area in addition to the appropriate means of egress and exit.

2.8 Press and broadcasting

Provision should be made for a press and interview area for the written and broadcast media and wireless internet access. The press seating must have a clear view of the field of play

The ground should meet the minimum broadcast standards (see Appendix B).

3. DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES

All dressing room areas must be maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and be heated, well ventilated, free from damp and secure on match days.

3.1 Players

Separate dressing rooms must be provided for both teams within the enclosed area of the ground. The dressing rooms must be of sound construction and be of a permanent nature. Existing dressing room dimensions will be acceptable provided they are a minimum of 12 square metres, excluding shower and toilet areas. Where clubs are planning to build new dressing rooms these must be a minimum size of 18 square metres, excluding shower and toilet areas.

Each dressing room must have the following:

- A shower area comprising of at least 4 showerheads

- 1 wash hand basin located outside the shower area.

(All of the above must have hot and cold running water)

- At least 1 WC **in a cubicle**

There must be a treatment table which is clean and in good condition in each room.

3.2 Match Officials

The size of the match officials' dressing room must be a minimum of 4 square metres, excluding shower and toilet areas. When new dressing rooms are being constructed the match officials' room should be a minimum of 6 square metres in size, excluding shower and toilet areas.

Each match officials' dressing room must have the following:

- At least 1 shower and 1 wash hand basin (both with hot and cold running water).

- At least 1 WC **in a cubicle**

Provision should be made for separate dressing rooms for male and female match officials. Where new dressing rooms are being constructed or existing ones are being re-designed, separate purpose built facilities for male and female match officials must be provided.

There must be an audible electronic warning device (bell or buzzer) in working order located in the match officials' dressing room and which is linked to the players' dressing rooms.

4.0 Doping Control & Medical

There must be a separate area which can be used for doping control. This must provide a private waiting/processing area for officials and players and a separate, private toilet which should be secure and not be shared with any other areas.

There must be a suitably equipped medical treatment room located in the vicinity of the players' dressing rooms for the use of both players and spectators. Access to this room must not be via the home or away dressing room.

The designated room must contain a bed and/or comfortable seating, with cold and, ideally, hot water, together with paper towels. Reusable individual towels are not permitted.

At least one stretcher must be provided for the removal of injured players from the field of play.

There must be a nominated and suitably qualified person in attendance to assist with spectator problems unless the St John Ambulance Brigade, Red Cross Society or other capable agency are in attendance. The requirements of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds are for one first aider per 1,000 anticipated spectators, with a minimum of two.

If a crowd of less than 2,000 is anticipated, known and practiced arrangements should be in place to summon either a doctor or NHS ambulance alternative. For crowds of over 2,000, an experienced crowd doctor should be in attendance.

NB The above in no way purports to be a comprehensive list of Health and Safety issues which it is the responsibility of a club to address. Clubs are recommended to arrange regular safety audits conducted by persons with the appropriate expertise.

Appendix A - Minimum Pitch Standard Requirements

The Performance Quality Standard (PQS) set out below provides a minimum quality standard for the maintenance and construction of pitches. Specifically, it sets the basic standard recommended for natural grass pitches, which may be located at a variety of locations including a Club site, within a park or recreational ground.

Principally, this recommends that a natural grass pitch must:

- Have adequate grass cover
- Low level of weed coverage
- Be flat
- Have the ability to drain water
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If met, the PQS ensures a flat drained surface suitable for Matches played in The FA WSL.

Tolerances were set as a direct result of input from the voluntary technical consortium. This body was established to agree on a common technical approach to be utilised under the programme. This included the development of PQS. Sport England is currently undertaking a data checking exercise, in order to quantify the technical aspects of pitch improvement/construction. This technical data will be an important 'legacy', which will be passed onto The FA.

The level of quality to be achieved is that as per the **Standard** Column, as shaded in the below tables. Details of the Methods of Test, along with a full explanation of Performance Quality Standards, can be obtained from The FA or the Institute of Groundsmanship.

1. Structural Quality

Performance Standard	Performance Quality Standard		
	High	Standard	Basic
A. Herbage			
i) Length of herbage: to be within	6 to 10mm	6 to 12mm	8 to 14mm
ii) Bare area. (a) area & (b) diameter of any bare area	(a) max. 5% (b) max. 25mm	(a) max. 10% (b) max. 25mm	(a) max. 20% (b) max. 40mm
iii) Total ground cover	min. 95%	min. 90%	min. 80%
iv) Desirable grass species	min. 90%	min. 80%	min. 60%
v) <i>Poa annua</i>	max. 10%	max. 15%	max. 30%
vi) Other undesirable grass species	Nil	Nil	max. 10%
vii) Weeds - Large-leaved	Nil	Nil	Nil
viii) Weeds - Small-leaved	Nil	max. 2%	max. 5%
ix) Moss	Nil	Nil	Nil
x) Algae and Lichen	Nil	Nil	Nil
B. Pests and Diseases			

i) Diseases	Nil	Nil	Nil
ii) Earthworms	Nil	max. 2%	max. 6%
iii) Pests	Nil	Nil	Nil
C. Profile			
i) Root depth	min. 150mm	min. 100mm	min. 75mm
ii) Thatch depth	Nil	Nil	max. 2mm
iii) Rootzone medium	min. 150mm	min. 100mm	min. 75mm
iv) Soil strength: to be within	70 to 100kg	60 to 70kg	45 to 60kg
v) Evenness: 2m straight edge, or 0.5m straight edge	max. variation 4mm 3mm	max. variation 8mm 4mm	max. variation 10mm 6mm
vi) Hydraulic conductivity: (only to be measured during the winter)	min. 2mm per hour	min. 2mm per hour	min. 1mm per hour

2. Presentational Quality

Performance Standard	Performance Quality Standard		
	High	Standard	Basic
i) Appearance	100% uniform texture	min. 90% uniform texture	min. 70% uniform texture
ii) Surface debris	Nil	Nil	Nil
iii) Sward colour [†]	100% uniform	90% uniform	70% uniform

Appendix B - Broadcast Requirements

A: For All FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 Highlights Matches

In respect of each Match to be played at any Home Ground the Club must ensure that the following is complied with in full:

- Provide access for a certified scaffolding representative for inspection and tagging of the scaffold tower/camera platform within 3 days prior to each Match;
- Provide the use of an appropriate number of telephone lines (voice, facsimile and data), broadband internet access with wireless access points, photocopying facilities and press facilities (including power access for computers, reserved press seats and desks, an access point for members of the press to collect accreditation and complimentary refreshments) for FA, broadcaster and press use;
- Provide accreditation in advance for two nominated crew members from The FA's appointed production company. Unless otherwise notified by The FA, this is to be arranged directly with such company in accordance with such companies requirements;
- Provide Match day parking for two production vehicles;
- Provide accreditation access to the Press Office for the collection of official printed team sheets;
- Provide a room suitable for flash interviews to accommodate at least (i) an interviewer & interviewee, (ii) camera operator, (iii) a camera with tripod, (iv) 1 x light with stand, and (v) the Interview Backdrop (as defined in Clause 11.1.3(h)). Must also include access to a mains point. This room should be located as close to the players changing rooms as possible; and
- Ensure that any floodlights that have been used during the Match remain on in full until all post match interviews are finished and equipment is safely removed from the football ground/camera platform.

B: For All FA WSL1 Live Matches

In addition to A above, for all Matches which are going to be broadcast live from the Home Ground, the Club must also ensure that the following is complied with in full for the benefit of The FA and the Broadcaster(s):

- Provide access to the Club to recce the ground pre match day
- Provide access to the club the day before match day to rig
- Provide access to Club Players and first team coach/managers for a pre-match shoot and for match day interviews

- Provide permission to build scaffolding for camera positions
- Provide access to gantry on rig & match day
- Provide tunnel access on rig & match day
- Provide access to and use of Fibre box at venue if applicable
- Provide parking space for (i) 45 cars and (ii) the following units: OB Unit, TSV, GFX, Tender, 2 x Catering truck, Generator and Fibre
- Provide space to accommodate 10 x match cams (Including 1 x Pitchside Steadicam Op) and 2 x net cams
- Provide a TV Compound of a minimum size of 50m²
- Provide a meeting room for use of the Broadcaster(s) on match day
- Provide 35 match day programmes.