

# Women's Football Pyramid Establishment & Operation Regulations



## REGULATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL

### 1. Introduction

The Women's Football Pyramid shall comprise a system by which promotion and relegation links shall exist between participating leagues (the "Leagues") and shall be operated in accordance with these regulations.

The aims and objectives of the Women's Football Pyramid are:

- To provide clubs with a level of competitive football appropriate to their playing ability, stadium/ground facilities and economic means.
- To provide a framework for discussion on matters of policy and common interest to leagues and clubs.
- To allow the seasonal movement of clubs.

All leagues, and clubs participating from time to time in such leagues (the "Clubs"), shall be bound by these regulations until such time they resign in writing from the Women's Football Pyramid. All leagues will be required to sign a copy of these regulations as and when required by the FA Women's Football Committee ("FAWFC").

### 2. Position of a League in the Women's Football Pyramid

2.1 The structure of the Women's Football Pyramid is set out at Appendix A.

2.2 Any league wishing to become part of the Women's Football Pyramid at Step 6 must advise The Football Association in such form and/or providing such information as shall be required by the FAWFC from time to time. The decision as to whether or not a league should be admitted to, and their position in the Women's Football Pyramid shall be made by the FAWFC and shall be final and binding.

2.3 Any league whose membership of the Women's Football Pyramid is suspended or withdrawn by the FAWFC, or due to resignation by the league, will not be eligible to participate in any business of the Women's Football Pyramid, including the promotion and relegation process, during the period of suspension or after the date of such withdrawal or resignation of membership.

### 3. Rules and Regulations for Promotion and Relegation

3.1 The Women's Football Pyramid shall provide for the seasonal promotion and relegation of clubs between Steps within the system. A league that signifies its acceptance to be bound by these regulations must be in a position to promote and relegate clubs at the conclusion of each season. In extenuating circumstances, where a league is not in a position to relegate due to that league not being up to strength, they must obtain the permission of the FAWFC, whose decision shall be final and binding.

A club shall be promoted or relegated to the correct designated league in the Women's Football Pyramid according to their County FA affiliation, unless complying with the provisions of Regulation 4.2.

### 4. Detailed Promotion and Relegation Issues

4.1 Eligibility criteria, including ground grading, shall be agreed between the WFC and the various leagues. Details of the requirements at each Step are contained in the Women's Football Pyramid Ground Grading Document as published by The Football Association.

It may be necessary from time to time to move clubs between leagues at the same Step to accommodate the movement of clubs by normal promotion and relegation. Where this is necessary, no club will be asked to move more than once in any three seasons, unless it would be advantageous to do so earlier than three seasons, as determined by the FAWFC whose decision shall be final and binding.

4.3 At the conclusion of each season, the following procedures will apply:

#### Step 1 and Step 2

The clubs finishing in the bottom two places at Step 1 (FAWPL National Division) will be relegated and placed in the most geographically appropriate division at Step 2 (FAWPL Northern & Southern Divisions). They will be replaced by the clubs finishing in 1st position in each of the divisions at Step 2.

#### Step 2 and Step 3

The clubs in the bottom two places in each of the two divisions at Step 2 will be relegated to Step 3 (Combination Leagues). They will be replaced by the clubs finishing in 1st position in each of the leagues at Step 3 subject to the ground grading criteria for Step 2.

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## Step 3 and Step 4

The clubs in the bottom two places in each of the four leagues at Step 3 will be relegated to Step 4 (Regional League Premier Divisions). They will be replaced by the clubs finishing in 1st position in each of the leagues at Step 4. Should a club finishing in 1st position not wish to be considered for promotion, then the club finishing in 2nd or 3rd place may take its place. Clubs finishing lower than 3rd place will not be considered for promotion.

## Step 4 and Step 5

The clubs in the bottom two places in each of the eight leagues at Step 4 will be replaced by the clubs finishing in 1st place in the sixteen divisions at Step 5 (Regional Leagues 1st Divisions). Should the ground of a club finishing in 1st position not be suitable by the respective management committee for Step 4, then a club finishing in 2nd (or 3rd) may take its place, provided that its ground does meet the requirements of Step 4.

Other promotion and relegation can occur if agreed by the Clubs in membership and with the approval of the WFC.

A club finishing in a position lower than 3rd will not be considered for promotion.

## Step 5 to Step 6

The movement of clubs between Steps 5 and 6 (County Leagues) will be at the discretion of the appropriate Joint Liaison Committees.

Where the appropriate Joint Liaison Committee decides that a number of play-off matches are required for promotion and relegation, then these play-off matches shall be organised at the end of the season, provided that the clubs were given notice prior to the start of that season or, if such notice is not possible due to circumstances during the season, in agreement with all clubs involved with these play-off matches.

Where there are sufficient numbers in a County League and vacancies exist in a Regional League, the Regional League can receive up to three promotion places from a County League at the end of the season as determined by the appropriate Joint Liaison Committee.

## Steps within the same League

In exceptional circumstances, the promotion and relegation within the Steps in the same League may be decided by majority of those Clubs eligible to vote and in attendance at a Special General Meeting or Annual General Meeting, subject to approval of the FAWFC whose decision shall be final and binding.

## Reserve Teams

Where a Reserve Section/Division exists in a Regional League, which is either operated solely by the Regional League or jointly with a Combination League, any Reserve Teams, or any additional teams of the clubs already members of the Women's Football Pyramid, in that Regional League's Step 5 shall move to the Reserve Section/Division when it is established. Any Reserve Team, or any additional teams of the clubs already playing in the Women's Football Pyramid, promoted from the County League shall take their place in such Reserve Section/ Division where one exists.

Where a Reserve Section/Division does not exist in a Regional League, Reserve Teams are not permitted to play above Step 5.

## 5. The Movement of Clubs within the Women's Football Pyramid other than by Promotion or Relegation

5.1 Movement of a club from participation in one league to another is not permitted other than by promotion and relegation save with the approval of the WFC, such approval being final and binding.

5.2 Any club proposing to move from one league to another must make appropriate applications to resign from and be elected to the relevant leagues in accordance with the rules and regulations of those leagues. Any such notice must in any event, and regardless of any provisions to the contrary in a league's rules and regulations, be given to both leagues and the WFC by 1st April in the relevant year in order to be valid.

If a club (whether a Members' Club or a Company) is liquidated or withdrawn or removed from a league and then wishes to reform and/or re-enter the Women's Football Pyramid the following season, unless otherwise determined by the FAWFC, it will be allowed to make an application only to join a league/division a minimum of two Steps below the league/division in which it was a member when liquidated, withdrawn or removed. This relates only to clubs that wish to reform and/or return for the following season and subject to the approval of the FAWFC whose decision shall be final and binding.

In the event that a league in the Women's Football Pyramid ceases to exist, the clubs previously belonging to that league would be placed at the next highest level of the Women's Football Pyramid for the following season, unless otherwise requested by a club or the FAWFC decides that there is a strong reason for that club being placed elsewhere in the Women's Football Pyramid. The decision of the FAWFC shall be final and binding.

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## 6. Election of a Club into a League

In normal circumstances a club can enter the Women's Football Pyramid only at Step 6 (County League level) and only to the County League of their Parent County Association. However, in exceptional circumstances a league may seek approval from the WFC to elect a club not currently in membership of a league within the Women's Football Pyramid provided that there is: (a) a vacancy within its constitution (b) the club meets the entry criteria and (c) promotion and relegation issues have been satisfied.

The determination by the WFC shall be final and binding.

## 7. Women's Football Conference

The Women's Football Conference (the Conference) will comprise of representatives from leagues within the Women's Football Pyramid and the WFC with the objective to take steps to protect and further the interests of Girl's and Women's Association Football.

## 8. Joint Liaison Committees

Regional Joint Liaison Committees (JLC's) will be established to consider matters relating to the development of the Women's Football Pyramid in their regions. In particular JLC's will be responsible for the determining the promotion and relegation of clubs between Steps 5 & 6.

The Joint Liaison Committees will be established on a regional basis and will comprise of representatives of the Regional League and the appropriate County Leagues.

Both the Conference and the JLC's may refer a matter to the WFC for determination and the decision of the WFC shall be final and binding

## 9. Playing order of Precedence in the Women's Football Pyramid

Any Club with more than one team in any Competition in the Women's Football Pyramid shall always fulfil its fixtures in this order to precedence, subject to the players being properly registered with the League(s): First Team, Reserve Team, A Team and other lower teams.

## 10. Procedures for the Determination of any Matter, Dispute or Difference by the Women's Football Committee

10.1 The WFC may adopt such procedures for the determination of any matter, dispute or difference as it considers appropriate and expedient, having regard to the aims and objectives set out at Regulation 1. The WFC may require the attendance at a meeting or the written observations of any league or club, as it considers appropriate to assist its determination.

10.2 The WFC may, at its discretion, delegate the resolution of any matter, dispute or difference arising under these Regulations to any body it considers to be appropriate (including a sub-committee or commission which may include members of council not on the WFC or a body constituted by a County Football Association).

10.3 Where there is a conflict between the Rules contained in these Regulations and the Rules of the Leagues, these Regulations will take precedence.

## 11. Appeal Procedure

Any dispute or difference between a league and a club relating to promotion and relegation issues and/or other eligibility criteria should be referred for determination to the WFC, such determination shall be final and binding. Any referral must be carried out in accordance with The Football Association's appeal procedure and be submitted at the offices of The Football Association, Wembley Stadium, PO Box 1966, London SW1P 9EQ within 14 days of the posting of the relevant decision and must be accompanied by a fee of £100.

## 12. The FA Women's Super League

The FA Women's Super League shall be introduced in March 2011. This league shall be outside of the Women's Football Pyramid until the 2013 FA Women's Super League season, at which point it shall be integrated into the Women's Football Pyramid.

No club may participate in both the FA Women's Super League and any Step of the Women's Football Pyramid, save that a club who participates in the FA Women's Super League may also have a Reserve Team that participates at up to Step 5 of the Women's Football Pyramid.

In accordance with Rule B8(c)(v) of the Rules of The Association, the playing season for The FA Women's Super League shall run between March and October each year.

The "Close Season" for The FA Women's Super League only shall be defined as the period between 1 December and 31 December

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inclusive each calendar year, save where The Association makes an order to the contrary, during which no club in the FA Women's Super League shall play any matches.

This shall not affect the Close Season for any league in the Women's Football Pyramid, which shall be in accordance with Rule B8 of the Rules of The Association.

## 13. Girls' Teams Playing in Leagues

13.1 From and including season 2009 / 10, any Clubs wishing to enter a new girls' team into a league competition shall only do so if the league competition is sanctioned by the County FA with which the Club has Membership. If the Club is in membership of more than one County FA, the league competition must be sanctioned by the Club's Parent Association.

This Regulation applies to all new teams, irrespective of whether a Club has another team already competing in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or any County FA.

13.2 The following exceptions to the above regulation shall apply, and a new team shall be permitted to compete in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or any County FA, regardless of whether the Club is in Membership of it, where the Club can establish:

- The travelling required to compete in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or another County FA is less onerous than the travelling that would be required to compete in the appropriate league sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable); or
- There is no appropriate age group division in the league sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable) for the new team to compete in; or

- The league sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable) does not offer the format of football that the Club wishes the new team to compete in eg 11 v 11, 7 v 7.

The County FA with which the Club has its Membership, or the Club's Parent Association where applicable, shall decide, at its absolute discretion, whether any one of the above exceptions applies and so whether the team may compete in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or another County FA, and its decision shall be final and not subject to appeal.

13.3 Teams may continue to participate in any league that they have participated in prior to season 2009 / 10, irrespective of whether that league is sanctioned by The Football Association or a County FA other than the one with which that team's Club has its Membership, or its Parent Association, where applicable.

## 14. Arbitration

The fact of participation in the Women's Football Pyramid and signifying agreement to be bound by these Regulations shall constitute an agreement between each league and club to refer to Arbitration any challenge in law arising out of, or in relation to, these Regulations in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of The Football Association.

*Note: Combination and Regional Leagues may run reserve divisions which, if necessary, can be combined.*

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## APPENDIX A – The Women's Football Pyramid

