



WOMEN'S PYRAMID OF FOOTBALL
GROUND GRADING CATEGORY C – TIER 3



For clubs seeking promotion to the FA Women's Championship, they should read the latest Women's Grade B ground regulations.

Clubs should note these are the minimum requirements and should aspire to exceed all criteria where possible.

1. GROUND

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

1.1 Security of Tenure

Where a club does not own the freehold of their ground then evidence of adequate security of tenure for one season must be provided.

1.2 Boundary of Ground

The ground must be enclosed by a permanent boundary, which will prevent spectators from viewing the game from outside the ground.

In certain circumstances one side of the ground, which adjoins private land/property, may be exempt from the need for a permanent boundary.

1.3 Capacity

There is no minimum capacity at this level but a club should be mindful that the minimum requirement for Grade B is 1,350.

1.4 Club House

There must be a clubhouse facility either on or adjacent to the ground, which should be open on match days to provide refreshments and toilet facilities to spectators, officials and players, 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.

1.6 Pitch Perimeter Barrier

Subject to the provisions detailed below, there must be a permanent fixed barrier ideally 1.1m 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.

Any barriers installed at new grounds should be purposely designed, with integrated infill panels as required and be made from UPVC or coated metal. The barrier, if other than solid wall type of construction, must be infilled so that the ball cannot pass through or under it. Plastic multi-purpose hi-vis fencing is not considered suitable for infill. 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 Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. 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 respective league Management Committee, and must be of a high standard. It must be level and free from surface depressions and excessive undulations.

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.

3G football turf

3G football turf may only be used provided conditions (i) to (v) below have been met (the "Performance Standard"):

- (i) The pitch must be surfaced with 3G football turf that has laboratory type approval according to the FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf (2012 & 2015 editions) – FIFA Recommended One Star/Quality level.
- (ii) The 3G football turf pitch must be listed on The Association's register of 3G football turf pitches by no later than 31 July and tested as per FA requirements at the Club's expense.
- (iii) Where a 3G football turf pitch is not yet listed on The Association's register (for example if it is a newly installed pitch), a Club must obtain a Laboratory Performance Test Certificate or Laboratory Report and submit it to The Association by no later than 31 July.
- (iv) The Association reserves the right to instruct a Club to have its pitch tested at any time in order to ensure that it meets the Performance Standard. All such tests shall be at the Club's expense.
- (v) The 3G football turf, including run-offs, shall be one continuous playing surface and shall be green in colour at least one metre from the outer edge of the touchline and goal line. All line markings shall be in accordance with the Laws of Association Football.

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 benches clearly marked "Home" and "Away" or "Visitors" are to be provided. They should be at least 3 metres apart. They must be on the same side of the pitch ideally either side of the halfway line, ideally both equidistant from it and provide an unobstructed view of the playing area. Each box should accommodate at least 8 persons on fixed seats or benches.

Clubs should be mindful of the fact that clubs may require up to 11 seats in the technical area. Where the trainers bench does not have enough seats, then additional seating must be made available alongside or behind the bench, a minimum of 1m away.

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.

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

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

Clubs should be mindful that the requirement for Grade B is an average lux reading of 180.

Reading 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.

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

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.

It is also recommended that at the same time as testing the lights clubs also test the electrical supply within the ground to ensure that the system complies with current electrical standards and request a visual inspection of the columns for signs of corrosion, fatigue and overloading.

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 1 fully operational turnstile, which must be of the controlled revolving type or a pay box where a charge for entry to the ground can be taken.

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.

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

2. SPECTATOR FACILITIES

2.1 Covered Standing/Seated Accommodation

Covered accommodation constructed of timber/steel/brick/concrete or any combination of these materials should be provided for a minimum of 100 spectators (seated or standing).

2.2 Toilets

The following minimum toilet facilities must be provided:

- 2 Ladies WC's
- 1 Gents WC
- 2 Urinals or equivalent

In addition, there must be at least one hand basin in each Ladies and Gents toilet area with hot and cold running water. Warm air hand driers and/or paper towels with an appropriate dispenser together with a supply of toilet paper must be provided.

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.

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

2.3 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 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.

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. Existing dressing rooms dimensions will be in order provided that they are of a minimum of 12 square metres. However, clubs wishing to progress should be aware of the need to increase to a minimum of 18 square metres. Where clubs are planning to build new changing rooms, these must be planned to 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
- At least 1 WC and 1 wash hand basin together with a warm air hand drier and/or paper towels in an appropriate dispenser.
- All must have hot and cold running water

There must be access to a treatment table which is clean and in good condition for both the Home and Away teams.

3.2 Match Officials

Separate dressing rooms must be provided for match officials, the minimum size of which shall be 4 square metres excluding shower and toilet areas.

Each dressing room must have the following:

- At least 1 shower
- At least 1 WC and 1 wash hand basin together with a warm air hand drier and/or paper towels in an appropriate dispenser.

Provision should be made for separate changing accommodation for both male and female match officials.

There must be an audible electronic warning device (bell or buzzer) located in the match official's dressing room, which is linked to the player's dressing rooms.

All dressing room areas to be maintained to a high level of cleanliness and secure on match days

3.3 Press Facilities

Facilities for the press should be available when required

4. Medical

There must be a suitable qualified person (minimum F.A. Introduction to First Aid in Football) in attendance.

All clubs must provide first aid equipment at their ground.