

Lower XV Teams joining the English Club Championships (ECC)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is highest level that a Lower XV can apply to play in?

The highest level that a Lower XV can apply to enter is Level 7.

Does sending an expression of interest guarantee entry into the English Club Championship (RFU Leagues) (ECC)?

No. All official entries (submitted when the application window opens on 18th February) will be assessed against the entry criteria that has been circulated.

If a club expresses an interest, does this mean they must apply for entry once they open?

Yes. If a club is still interested, can meet the entry criteria and is in a CB that whose clubs supports Lower XV teams joining the ECC, then a club will be required submit an official entry.

If a club does not express an interest at this stage, will they still be able to apply for entry when they open?

Yes. Clubs will be able to apply for entry, regardless of whether they express an interest.

When will Lower XV entries be opened?

Entries will open on the 28th February and will remain open until the 18th March.

When will we find out whether our entry into the league has been accepted?

Once entries have closed, the entries will be assessed against the Lower XV criteria. We will aim to inform teams as soon as possible after the deadline closes (early April).

Is it possible to enter multiple Lower XVs from one club into the RFU Leagues?

Yes, this is possible, however there will need to be separate expressions of interest and subsequent entries completed, with their own evidence of matching the criteria will be necessary. Lower XV teams from the same club will not be allowed to compete at the same level.

Can a club's Lower XV team compete at the same level as their 1st XV (or other higher XV if entering a 3rd or 4th team)?

No they cannot, there will be a maximum of one team per club per level.

Will there be more than one Lower XV team in a league?

If there are multiple entries at the same level in a nearby area then it is possible that there will be more than one Lower XV team competing in a single league.

If a team expresses an interest or applies to enter at a specific level but is not adjudged to be that standard, can they be entered at a lower level?

Yes, the FCS Implementation Commission will ultimately determine (by assessing applications against the criteria)

What if a club's Lower XV meet the criteria for entry but their Constituent Body votes against Lower XVs entering?

In this instance, the club will not be able to enter their Lower XV into the league structure.

What if the league that a club's Lower XV is looking to enter into is split across CBs (e.g. Herts/Middlesex 1 or Durham & Northumberland 1) where one has voted against the introduction of Lower XVs but the other has allowed it?

A Lower XV team from a CB that allows (Lower XV teams to join the ECC) will be permitted entry into that league, should they meet the criteria. A Lower XV team from a CB that has voted against it will not be permitted entry.

Will the 100 (registered) player limit change?

This detail is currently being finalised and will be published before the official Lower XV entry window closes. However, any regulation changes will be introduced to maintain the integrity of competition.

Will there be restrictions on 1st team players playing for Lower XV teams?

This detail is currently being finalised and will be published along with other regulation changes for the 2022-23 season in June. However, we currently have regions of the country where Lower XV teams already play in RFU Leagues (ECC) in the adult male game and there is a national policy in the womens game that permits Lower XV teams playing in RFU Leagues. Thus, whilst we cannot confirm what the specific regulation will be right now, we have several existing ones to either adopt or amend to fit the new competitions structure.

What if there are no EOI's from clubs within my CB? Does this mean they can still submit an entry to join the ECC?

Yes, clubs from any CB are eligible to submit an application to join the ECC when the official entry window opens on the 28th February. The RFU Council approved (April 2021) a national policy allowing Lower XV teams to play up to Level 7 in the English Club Championship (ECC). This is the default position for all CB's for the 2022-23 season. However, a CB may elect to hold a club vote to prevent Lower XV teams joining the ECC at its own instigation, or it must conduct a vote if requested in writing by the club chair or club secretary of the greater of:

- a. 10% of clubs or;
- b. Four clubs.

Example:

- *If there are 62 clubs within a CB, this would require seven clubs to request a vote*
- *If there are 18 clubs within a CB, this would require four clubs to request a vote*

CB's can only prevent clubs joining the ECC by electing to conduct a club vote and receiving at least a two thirds majority in support of this.