

## Post Council Meeting Update

**An RFU Council meeting was held (Friday 19 April 2024) with votes held on the following topics:**

1. Adult Player Registration regulations for the 2024-25 season
2. Tier 2 update
3. Changes to RFU Regulation 15 (Age Grade Rugby) for Season 2024-25
4. Appointment of RFU Presidential team and re-appointment of RFU Board Director

### **Adult Player Registration**

Council approved the launch of Adult Player Registration in the 2024-25 season at its February meeting. At today's meeting Council approved Regulation 13 and 14, a framework for adult player registration, which is a mandatory requirement from 1 July 2024, with delegated authority to the Governance Standing Committee to make minor updates as required.

Adult Player Registration digitises our current registration process, moving the responsibility away from volunteers to individual players and extends it to cover all players, improving our data and hence ability to manage the health of the game. This follows the successful role out of age-grade registration in the 2021-22 season, which became mandatory this season. The move to game-wide registration is intended to benefit the whole rugby community and brings rugby union in line with the majority of other Unions and other sports where this is common practice.

### **Tier 2 Update**

Since February 2023, the RFU, Championship Clubs Committee and Premiership Rugby Limited have been working to develop a reimagined Tier 2. The objective is to create a second tier that supports the English system by developing young English talent, whilst supporting the clubs to become financially sustainable by growing local audiences and increasing the value in the league.

RFU Council has approved the following:

**The principles of a new governance structure and decision-making responsibilities for the new league** – the composition of a Tier 2 Management Board will be three representatives from each of the RFU and Championship Clubs Committee with an independent Chair. The objective for the board is to create a body with independent, club and RFU representation responsible for decision-making for certain decisions relating to the league, giving it the ability to respond to the new Tier 2 specific context, while also streamlining the interactions with the delivery functions and club representations to ensure the optimal running and commercialisation of the league. The Tier 2 Management Board will be put in place at the earliest opportunity.

**Revised and enhanced Minimum Operating Standards (MOS) driving player development, fan experience, and growth ambitions** – the RFU Council today approved the 'essential' MOS that must be in place by the start of the 2025-26 season (see detail below).

Aligned to the growth ambitions for the league, the standards have been divided into three categories.

- Essential – standards that must be in place by the start of the 2025-26 season in order to participate in the league.
- Phased essential - standards will be introduced to the league as determined by the Tier 2 Management Board.
- Aspirational – standards linking to those for the Premiership, providing clubs seeking promotion with a benchmark to work towards.

**League size and competition structure options** – the RFU Council approved the principle that Tier 2 will comprise 14 clubs for season 2025-26.

Between the April and June Council meetings further modelling around 12, 14 and 16 club league structures, balancing commercial and performance with player welfare will take place. The precise mechanism for the selection of additional clubs will be worked on and presented at the June Council meeting.

Whilst a 14-team structure is preferable at this stage, a 16-team option is considered to be an aspirational goal for the league’s growth and development, and additional work is required to assess the future optimum number. Further recommendations will be brought to the June Council meeting.

Season 2024-25 will be a Championship of 12 clubs, comprising the 11 existing Championship clubs and the winner of National One (Chinnor RFC).

Council approved a process for existing Championship clubs to validate and evidence their ability to meet the “essential” minimum operating standards, and other matters, in order to participate in the new Tier 2 league, which will ultimately be decided by the Tier 2 Management Board.

Championship clubs, and Chinnor RFC, winner of National One, will be communicated with around the process for self-validation and provision of additional evidence.

Discussions around promotion and relegation to/from the Premiership are ongoing as part of the Professional Game Partnership, which would require Council approval and will be brought to the June meeting.

### **Changes to RFU Regulation 15 (Age Grade Rugby) for Season 2024-25**

The RFU Council approved changes to Regulation 15, with delegated authority to the Governance Standing Committee to finalise the wording of the regulations and make any necessary minor amendments as may be required.

The key changes, which have been approved by Age Grade Governance and (where applicable) Education Age Grade Sub Committee are summarised below:

- All “Playing Out of Age Grade” applications are to be made using the online forms; paper forms will no longer be accepted. Approval of Competitive Activity, Rugby Camps and Tours to also move to an online form.

- For combining age grades, the number of players permitted in the combined team from the older age group will be reduced from 50% to a third of players. The precise numbers applying to each age grade (depending on the number of players on a team) is specified in the table at regulation 15.5. This was recommended by the Education Age Grade Sub-Committee to ensure that combining is being done for the right reasons and, following feedback from the game, balances providing playing opportunities and retention with player safety and welfare. This will be supported by a more detailed group assessment process via a new online form.
- Increasing the definition of the circumstances under which U19s can play down in schools and colleges and to also include ERFSU approval in the case of schools. This is to ensure greater assurance of the reasons that these players need to play down, a more robust and neutral assessment of any player safety risk and to ensure that the possibility of playing with other (lower) age grades is considered.
- Creating consistency in the assessments required in all “Playing Out of Age Grade” scenarios.

## **Council and Board appointments**

The RFU Council approved the Nominations Committee re

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### **Council and Board appointments**

The RFU Council approved the Nominations Committee recommendations for the appointment (and for ratification at the AGM) of:

- President: Rob Udwin
- Senior Vice-President: Deborah Griffin OBE
- Junior Vice-President: Sir William (Bill) Beaumont GBE (effective from 15 Nov 2024)
- Immediate Past President: Rob Briers (the IPP does not require AGM ratification)
- Women and Girls’ representative on Council for a further three-year term: Lou Latter (effective 1 August 2024)

- Board director for an additional one-year term: Jonathan Webb (effective 1 August 2024)