

REGULATIONS FOR THE PYRAMID LEAGUE SYSTEM EFFECTIVE FOR SEASON 2020-2021

Definition

In these Regulations, the following words and expressions have the following meaning:-

Area Association:	Any regional football association defined pursuant to Rule 11.1.2.
Council:	Supreme executive body of the FAW as defined in the Rules.
Directly Affiliated League:	Any men's league defined pursuant to Rule 11.1.3.
FAW:	Football Association of Wales Limited.
FAW Championship:	Means the divisions in Tier 2 of the Pyramid League System being the "FAW Championship North & Mid" and the "FAW Championship South & Mid".
Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations:	The quality standards and procedures set by the FAW from time to time to which all existing members of the Welsh Premier League and those seeking promotion to the Welsh Premier League must adhere.
Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations:	The ground facilities set by the FAW from time to time which all existing members of Tier 2 and those seeking promotion to Tier 2 must adhere at their registered home ground.
Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations:	The ground facilities set by the FAW from time to time which all existing members of Tier 3 and those seeking promotion to Tier 3 must adhere at their registered home ground.
Football Related Liabilities:	Shall have the meaning defined in the Preamble to the Rules.
Ground Criteria:	Shall mean the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations, the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations or the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations, as the case may be.
National Level:	Tiers 1 and 2 of the Pyramid League System.
Playing Season:	Shall have the meaning defined in the Preamble to the Rules.
Play-Off Matches:	The matches played in accordance with 3(f)(ii) of these Regulations.
Pyramid League System:	The pyramid league system for the playing of competitive league men's football in Wales at various levels ("Tiers"), as approved by the FAW from time to time.
Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3:	The top Tiers 1 - 3 inclusive of the Pyramid League System the structure of which from the commencement of season 2020/2021 is attached as Appendix 1 to these Regulations.
Qualifying Club:	Any club, being a full Member of the FAW, defined pursuant to Rule 11.1.1.

Regional Level:	Tier 3 of the Pyramid League System.
Rules:	The rules of the FAW as passed by the Members of the FAW from time to time.
Tier 1:	The Welsh Premier League comprising Qualifying Clubs who have obtained the Tier 1 licence pursuant to the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations playing at National Level, aspiring to play in European football. The League is administered by the FAW.
Tier 2:	The two divisions of the FAW Championship comprising Qualifying Clubs who have met the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations and playing at National Level, aspiring to play at Tier 1 level. The FAW Championship is administered by the FAW.
Tier 3:	Four divisions comprising Qualifying Clubs who have met the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations playing at Regional Level, aspiring to play at National Level. The divisions are administered by one or more Directly Affiliated League(s) on behalf of the FAW.
Welsh Premier League:	Means the premier league (Tier 1), being the top division in the Pyramid League System, for the playing of association football by men in Wales.

1. Responsibilities and Objectives

- (a) The Pyramid League System provides football clubs throughout Wales with a framework of competitive men's football appropriate to their playing standards, ground facilities, geographical location and economic means and permits the seasonal promotion, relegation or lateral movement of clubs between the Tiers and the divisions of the Tiers in an orderly manner.
- (b) The FAW has responsibility for Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 which form the Directly Affiliated Leagues in the Pyramid League System and the Area Associations have responsibility for those leagues in the Pyramid League System below the Directly Affiliated Leagues (Tier 4 and below).
- (c) Except where otherwise stated, these Regulations apply to Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3.

2. League Structure

- (a) The Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 for Directly Affiliated Leagues shall be determined by the FAW. Each Directly Affiliated League (and its divisions in Tiers 2 and 3) will be placed at a given Tier in the system, with the Welsh Premier League at the head.

- (b) No Directly Affiliated League or Area Association shall incorporate any changes in the structure of any part of the Pyramid League System except at the direction, and with the approval, of the FAW.
- (c) The FAW will control these Regulations. No Directly Affiliated League in the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 shall change the number of its divisions or number of teams playing in a division without the written permission of the FAW.
- (d) Divisions in Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 shall contain no more than 16 teams, unless with the written permission of the FAW.
- (e) Every Directly Affiliated League in the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 shall conform with the decisions of the FAW as laid down from time to time.
- (f) All clubs in the Welsh Premier League must hold a current annual Tier 1 licence under the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations to play in the Welsh Premier League. Any club playing in the Welsh Premier League that fails to obtain renewal of its licence for the next season shall be relegated one Tier from the Welsh Premier League to the FAW Championship at the end of the season in which the unsuccessful application was made.
- (g) All Tier 2 clubs, must satisfy the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations to play in Tier 2. Any club playing Tier 2 that fails to satisfy the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations for the next season shall be relegated one Tier to Tier 3 at the end of the season in which the unsuccessful application was made.
- (h) All Tier 3 clubs, must satisfy the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations to play in Tier 3. Any club playing Tier 3 that fails to satisfy the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations for the next season shall be relegated one Tier to Tier 4 at the end of the season in which the unsuccessful application was made.

3. Promotion / Relegation

- (a) Save where the FAW otherwise directs under Regulation 3(g), there shall be automatic promotion and relegation between the Tiers of the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 (and promoted/relegated into and out of Tier 3), provided the promoted club meets the necessary Ground Criteria. A Qualifying Club (and a club otherwise promoted into Tier 3 from Tier 4) will not be promoted if it is not successful in its application.
- (b) No Directly Affiliated League or Area Association will be allowed to operate a Ground Criteria for promotion which is more stringent than the level of the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 they feed into.
- (c) The Ground Criteria application process shall be as follows:-
 - (i) Clubs must apply to the FAW in writing as per the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the criteria in the FAW Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations for playing in the Welsh Premier League;
 - (ii) clubs must apply to the FAW in writing as per the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the criteria in the FAW Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations for playing in Tier 2; and

- (iii) clubs must apply to the FAW in writing as per the relevant Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations for playing in Tier 3.
- (d) A Qualifying Club in any division of Pyramid Tiers 2 and 3 that applies for and meets the relevant Ground Criteria and achieves a promotional place in its division of a Tier and a club from Tier 4 that achieves a promotional place to Tier 3 and meets the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations must take up the promotion to the higher Tier in the next Playing Season.
- (e) No reserve team shall be permitted to play in the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3, except in a dedicated reserves division which operates outside of the Pyramid League System.
- (f) Subject to the overriding provisions of Regulations 2(d), 2(f), 2(g) and 2(h) and the FAW's right to prescribe the number of clubs to be promoted and relegated within the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 under Regulation 3(g), promotion and relegation at the end of the Playing Season shall be as follows:-
 - i. between Tiers 1 and 2 – the clubs finishing the bottom two places of the Welsh Premier League shall be relegated to the FAW Championship and placed by the FAW (using its power under Regulation 3(g)) in the most geographically appropriate division of the FAW Championship. These clubs will be replaced by the clubs finishing in first position in each of the divisions of the FAW Championship but where a club finishing in first position does not meet the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations the club finishing in second position in that division shall be promoted provided it meets the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations;
 - ii. between Tiers 2 and 3:-
 - a. the clubs finishing in the bottom three places of each of the two divisions in the FAW Championship will be relegated to a division of Tier 3 and placed in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 3 by the FAW using its power under Regulation 3(g);
 - b. clubs finishing in first position in each of the four divisions of Tier 3 shall be promoted to Tier 2 but where a club finishing in first position does not meet the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations the club finishing in second position in that division shall be promoted provided it meets the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations;
 - c. the clubs finishing in second position in each of the four divisions of Tier 3 shall take part in Play-Off Matches. Where a club finishing in second position does not meet the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations, or if the club finishing second has already been promoted pursuant to Regulation 3(f)(ii)(a) above, the club finishing in third position in that division shall take part in the relevant Play-Off Match provided it meets the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations but no club below third position in a division shall take part in a Play-Off Match;

- d. there will be two Play-Off Matches featuring those four clubs arranged on a regional basis at the absolute discretion of the FAW. Each match will be played over a single leg and staged at a neutral ground selected and organised by the FAW; and
 - e. in the event of the scores being level at the end of 90 minutes play, extra time will be played in two equal periods of 15 minutes. The team which has scored the most goals will be declared the winner at the end of the two periods of extra time. If the tie is still undecided after extra time the winners will be determined by the taking of Kicks from the Penalty Mark in accordance with the International Board Decision in the Laws of the Game; and
 - iii. between Tiers 3 and 4:-
 - a. clubs finishing in the bottom three places in each of the four divisions of Tier 3 will be relegated to Tier 4 and (after considering the representations made at the joint liaison committee meeting held under Regulation 5(b)) placed in a division of Tier 4 by the FAW in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 4; and
 - b. twelve clubs will be promoted from Tier 4, two from each of the six Area Associations. The promoted clubs will be determined by the Area Association concerned subject to the agreement of the FAW and placed in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 3 as stipulated by the FAW (after considering the representations made at the joint liaison committee meeting held under Regulation 5(b)).
- (g) The number of clubs promoted to a Tier must equate to the number of clubs relegated from the Tier, unless this would result in the Welsh Premier League or a division of Tiers 2 – 3 (as the case may be) having more or less than 16 teams in the next Playing Season or, in the case of Tiers 2 and 3, any club playing in a division inappropriate to its geographical location. In such circumstances, the FAW may consider:-
 - i. reducing the number of clubs relegated from the higher Tier;
 - ii. increasing the number of clubs relegated from the lower Tier;
 - iii. increasing or decreasing the number of clubs promoted into or out of any Tier; or
 - iv. placing a club promoted or relegated to or from a Tier, or a club in a Tier that has not been promoted or relegated, in a different division of the relevant Tier to that which it would otherwise be promoted or relegated, or would have remained.
- (h) Except in the case of Play-Off Matches, no Directly Affiliated League shall promote a club which does not finish as champions, or runners up.

- (i) Directly Affiliated Leagues must inform both the FAW and the relevant Area Associations by 1st February each year of clubs that have made application to be assessed against the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations and therefore who, if successful, will be eligible to be promoted to Tier 3 of the Pyramid League System at the end of the season, irrespective of league positions at that date.
- (j) All clubs who wish to make an application to be assessed against the relevant Ground Criteria and therefore who, if successful, will be eligible to be promoted to or within the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 in the following season must do so in writing to the higher Directly Affiliated League between the start of the season and 31st December, except for the Welsh Premier League where applications must be made by 30th September. A first ground inspection will be made before 1st February to inform clubs what work they are required to do to meet the Ground Criteria but (subject to anything to the contrary in the Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations, Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations or Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations, as applicable) they must complete all work to comply in full with the Ground Criteria of the higher Directly Affiliated League by 30th April to be eligible for promotion. Save as permitted in the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations and Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations, under no circumstances will a club be promoted if they do not meet the Ground Criteria by the 30th April deadline. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines contained or referred to in this sub-clause of the Regulations.
- (k) Any club proposing ground sharing arrangements for matches in the next season in the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 must ensure written confirmation is provided to the FAW by 1st April. This arrangement must satisfy the FAW and must be for a minimum of one season. Any club entering into a ground sharing arrangement for one season and being promoted on this basis, will automatically be relegated after one season if they are unable to continue the arrangement and are unable to confirm their facilities for the following season by 1st April. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines in this sub-clause of the Regulations.
- (l) The inspection of clubs' facilities for matches in the Welsh Premier League shall be the responsibility of the FAW as per the FAW Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations. The inspection of clubs' facilities for matches in Tiers 2 and 3 shall be the responsibility of the FAW as per the Tier 2 Ground Criteria Regulations and Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations respectively. The inspection of clubs' facilities for matches in Tier 4 of the Pyramid League System, in respect of those clubs in Tier 4 who have made application to be assessed against the Tier 3 Ground Criteria Regulations, shall be the responsibility of the FAW. The FAW shall be solely responsible for determining whether the applicant complies with the Ground Criteria of the relevant Directly Affiliated League. All applicant clubs must pay a ground inspection fee as follows; Tier 1 = £200, Tier 2 = £150, Tier 3 = £100.
- (m) In respect of the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3, Directly Affiliated Leagues and Area Associations must advise the FAW and each other within seven days of end of the Playing Season of the clubs who, subject to these Regulations, will be relegated or, having satisfied the Ground Criteria, will be eligible for promotion.

4. The Movement of Clubs within the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 4 other than by Promotion or Relegation

- (a) Whenever a club applies pursuant to Rule 11.1.1.3 for admission to Membership of the FAW as a Qualifying Club playing in a Directly Affiliated League, the following will apply:-
- i. The application by the club should be submitted as soon as possible and in any event must be received by the Chief Executive of the FAW by 1st June.
 - ii. The application should include details of:-
 - a. the reason for the application;
 - b. the proposed playing name;
 - c. a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Ground Criteria; and
 - d. the management structure of the club.
 - iii. The application will be determined by the Council in its absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Council shall have the power to:-
 - a. grant consent as applied for; or
 - b. grant consent in principle but order the applicant club play at a different Tier in Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 to that applied for; or
 - c. refuse consent for the applicant club to play in Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 but order the applicant club play in a league at a Tier in the Pyramid League System below Tier 3; or
 - d. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Council thinks necessary including, without limitation, the playing name of the applicant club or, where there is a strong connection between the applicant club and the club that has, for example, (1) been wound up or (2) is being taken over as a going concern by the applicant club, the Council will have the power to impose a condition requiring the applicant club to make a contribution (in whole or in part in the Council's absolute discretion) to the Football Related Liabilities of the club that has been wound up or is being taken over; or
 - e. refuse the application.
- Solely as guidance to any potential applicant under this Regulation 4 (a) that has a strong connection to a club that has been wound up, and without limiting the absolute discretion of Council, the FAW will ordinarily expect the applicant club to apply to join the Pyramid League System either at Tier 3 or two Tiers below the level at which the other (connected) club competed prior to being wound up, whichever is the lower.
- (b) If a Qualifying Club ceases to compete in a Directly Affiliated League during a season but that Qualifying Club wishes to apply to continue playing in the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 in the following season, the following will apply:-

- i. An application by the Qualifying Club should be submitted as soon as possible and in any event must be received by the Chief Executive of the FAW by 1st June.
- ii. The application should include details of:-
 - a. the reason for the application, including the reason the Qualifying Club ceased to compete in the Directly Affiliated League;
 - b. a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Ground Criteria; and
 - c. the management structure of the applicant.
- iii. The application will be determined by the Council in its absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Council shall have the power to:-
 - a. grant consent as applied for; or
 - b. grant consent in principle but order the Qualifying Club play at a different Tier in Pyramid Tiers 1 -3 to that applied for; or
 - c. refuse consent for the Qualifying Club to play in Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 but order the Qualifying Club play in a league at a Tier in the Pyramid League System below Tier 3; or
 - d. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Council thinks necessary including, without limitation, a condition requiring the applicant club to discharge (in whole or in part in the Council's absolute discretion) the Football Related Liabilities of the club before the commencement of the next Playing Season; or
 - e. refuse the application.

Solely as guidance to Qualifying Clubs making an application under this Regulation 4(b) and without limiting the absolute discretion of Council, the FAW will ordinarily expect a Qualifying Club to play in Tier 3 of the Pyramid League System or two levels below the level at which it competed prior to ceasing to compete, whichever is the lower.

- (c) If two or more Qualifying Clubs or one Qualifying Club and another club propose a transaction or series of transactions which result in the merging or consolidation of those two clubs into one club (“the Proposed Merged Club”) and wish to apply for consent to play in Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 in the following season, the following will apply:-
 - i. A joint application by the two clubs must be received by the Chief Executive of the FAW by no later than 1st June.
 - ii. The application should include details of:-
 - a. the reason for the application;
 - b. the proposed playing name;

- c. a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Ground Criteria;
 - d. identification of all Football Related Liabilities;
 - e. a declaration that the Proposed Merged Club will adopt and, in the ordinary course of business, discharge all the Football Related Liabilities of the two clubs; and
 - f. a declaration that each applicant club is compliant with the Rules and rules of membership of its relevant Directly Affiliated League or Area Association.
- iii. The application will be determined by the Council in its absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Council shall have the power to:-
- a. grant consent as applied for; or
 - b. grant consent in principle but order the Proposed Merged Club play at a different Tier in Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 to that applied for; or
 - c. refuse consent for the Proposed Merged Club to play in Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 but order the Proposed Merged Club play in a league at a Tier in the Pyramid League System below Tier 3; or
 - d. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Council thinks necessary including, without limitation, a condition requiring the Proposed Merged Club to discharge (in whole or in part in the Council’s absolute discretion) the Football Related Liabilities of both applicant clubs before the commencement of the next Playing Season; or
 - e. refuse the application.
- (d) Any application to fill a vacancy or otherwise compete in the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 in any other circumstances (including, without limitation, following incorporation or de-incorporation of a Qualifying Club under Rule 134) shall be determined by the Council in its absolute discretion. The Council shall only consider an application from a club playing at the immediate Tier below the League to which it applies to join.

5. Joint Liaison Committees

- (a) A joint liaison committee (“JLC”) shall discuss matters of policy relating to Ground Criteria and promotion and relegation issues which are common to the leagues in the Pyramid League System.
- (b) The JLC shall meet annually no sooner than 1st February and no later than 31st May each year and will be arranged by the FAW’s National Game Board (“NGB”) who will provide 14 days’ notice of the date and venue of the meeting along with a copy of the agenda specifying the business to be considered. Representatives of all Directly Affiliated Leagues must attend. Area Associations should also be invited to attend to discuss relevant matters concerning promotion and relegation between Tiers 3 and 4 but the final decision will be made by the FAW using its power under Regulation 3(f)(iii).

- (c) Any other meetings of the JLC that are deemed necessary can be called at any time by the NGB upon giving the notice referred to in Regulation 5(b) above.
- (d) Meetings of the JLC shall be chaired by a FAW representative from the NGB.
- (e) The expense of holding meetings of the JLC shall be borne by the FAW. The expenses of the relevant representatives attending JLC meetings shall be met by the Directly Affiliated League or the Area Association the delegate is representing.
- (f) JLCs shall have no jurisdiction over, or responsibility for, boundary adjustments for clubs playing in any Directly Affiliated League or Area Association. Such jurisdiction and responsibility shall rest solely with the FAW.

APPENDIX 1

