



***SCOTTISH
RUGBY***

**Scottish Rugby
Boys Age Banding Policy**

Foreword

The benefits of participation in sport are widely recognised, not just in terms of health but in building confidence, teamwork and friendships. Scottish Rugby's Values of **Leadership, Engagement, Achievement, Enjoyment** and **Respect** apply across all areas of our sport, from mini rugby through to our international teams.

Scottish Rugby, as the governing body for rugby football in Scotland, and through its Board are responsible, among other things, for managing the game. This includes making and applying various policies and codes of practice. Scottish Rugby, while seeking to develop and foster the game at all levels in Scotland, also wishes to ensure that this is done safely and recognises that issues arise in relation to players under the age of 18, who may subject to their physical development, skill level and experience wish to play in an older or younger age group than their eligible age band or at adult level.

Scottish Rugby has developed Age Grade policies over time to ensure that players are able to participate in rugby in the best possible environment to enjoy playing and developing skills as safely as possible. Our policies seek to try and ensure that within Clubs and Schools players are playing and training with others of a similar age to try and minimise disparities in physical maturity and experience.

We recognise that exceptionally, players may wish to play outwith the age grade they are eligible for, and Scottish Rugby developed some policies previously (under the banner of "Are You Ready To Play Rugby" (AYRTPR) which allowed players of sufficient physical maturity, skill and experience to play up a level after an assessment and written permission to do so. AYRTPR policies will be incorporated into our Age Banding policies going forward.

We have been reviewing these policies recently as it is recognised that research in growth and maturity has progressed since our policies were launched and the profile of our Youth rugby players has also changed, necessitating review. The changes outlined below are the first changes to our policies, but the review will be ongoing and continued research by Scottish Rugby is likely to result in more changes to our policies in the future.

In view of this, Scottish Rugby has adopted the attached Policies. All those within the jurisdiction of Scottish Rugby are obliged to comply with both the Policy and the Regulation.

To support our Policy and Regulation, we will provide advice and guidance to players, clubs and to the volunteers who are the heartbeat of our game. We will also monitor best practice in this area and will, where necessary and appropriate, update our Policy and Regulation accordingly.

David Pugh

Chief Medical Officer

Scottish Rugby

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Policy Statement

Scottish Rugby considers that:

- A player's eligible age band is determined by their age as of 1st September. Where a birthday falls on 1st September exactly, age band eligibility is the younger age band.
- Best practice is for players to play within a single age band as this minimises physical and maturational disparities and allows player development in the safest possible environment.
- Mixing players from two adjacent age bands is permissible to maximise playing opportunities, but it is imperative that this does not result in players with greater than a 2-year age difference playing on the pitch. 3-year age banding is only permitted if it is the result of a dispensated player on the pitch.
- The protection, safety and welfare of players participating in rugby is paramount. A player's physical development, skill level and experience may be such that the player may be allowed to participate in a competition in an older or younger age band but only where it can be assessed that the player has comparable physical maturity and skill levels with the participants they are playing with and against;
- In these exceptional cases, where a player seeks to compete in an age band either above or below their eligible age band, they must seek dispensation which will only be awarded if each of the following conditions have been satisfied before participation:

17-year-old player to Adult Rugby

Scottish Rugby policy is that players must be 18 years of age before they can participate in Adult Rugby. In exceptional cases, 17-year-old players can apply to play Adult rugby when the following process has been followed, and approval sought:

1. The player must be 17 years old; **AND**
2. The player must have completed the World Rugby online Rugby Ready course <https://passport.world.rugby/injury-prevention-and-risk-management/rugby-ready/>; **AND**
3. The player's coach must have completed Scottish Rugby's online RugbyRight course and be qualified to a minimum standard of Aspiring coach programme/UKCC Level 2 (or equivalent); **AND**
4. The player must upload evidence of participation in a structured strength and conditioning (S&C) programme; **AND**
5. The player must have undergone a tackle assessment in accordance with Scottish Rugby's Assessment Guidance, with a video of the assessment uploaded as part of the application form; **AND**
6. An application be submitted to Scottish Rugby by the player's Club or School reflecting details of the player's experience, injury history and the level of rugby to be played. For a prop or hooker aged 17 to be able to play adult rugby in the front row of the scrum the following is also required:
 - Information on the player's front row experience, ability and front row specific coaching received; **AND**
 - Player has passed a neck strength assessment if playing in hooker or prop position – arranged once application is received. In the event that this test is not passed, the player may be cleared to play up into adult rugby but not to play in the front row until they turn 18 years old.

See appendix 1 for further details.

15-year-old player to U18 Rugby

Scottish Rugby policy is that players must be 16 years of age before they can participate in U18 rugby. In exceptional cases, 15-year-old players can apply to play U18 Rugby when the following process has been followed, and approval sought:

1. The player must be 15 years old; **AND**

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2. The player must have completed the World Rugby online Rugby Ready course <https://passport.world.rugby/injury-prevention-and-risk-management/rugby-ready/>; **AND**
3. The player's coach must have completed Scottish Rugby's online RugbyRight course and be qualified to a minimum standard of UKCC Level 2/Aspiring coach programme (or equivalent); **AND**
4. The player must upload evidence of participation in a structured strength and conditioning (S&C) programme; **AND**
5. They player must have undergone a tackle assessment in accordance with Scottish Rugby's Assessment Guidance with a video of the assessment uploaded as part of the application form; **AND**
6. An application be submitted to Scottish Rugby by the player's Club or School reflecting details of the player's experience, injury history and the level of rugby to be played; **AND**
7. Player has undergone a physical maturity assessment undertaken by a Scottish Rugby representative – arranged once application received.
8. Players cleared to play up may not play in a front row position until they are 16 years old.

See appendix 1 for further details.

Players requesting to play rugby in a lower age band than their eligible age band

This is a policy which will allow players whose physical maturity may be better suited to playing down an age band to be assessed by Scottish Rugby. These players will typically have been slower to start their progress through puberty and will benefit from additional time at a younger age band until their maturation is similar to their peers. Applications can be made by coaches on behalf of players (with parent/guardian permission) whose height and weight are below or close to the trigger values (see table below) for their eligible age grade published in our table and whom the coach has identified as having better opportunities to progress their rugby. Coaches should not nominate players who have a high level of skills and will develop better in their eligible age band.

Applications will not be considered on behalf of players who want to play in a younger age group because their friends play there or when there aren't sufficient players to make a team at their eligible age band.

Players may be granted dispensation to play down provided the following process has been followed and approval granted:

1. The player must achieve Scottish Rugby's height and weight trigger requirements as detailed in the application guidance (see table below); **AND**
2. The player's coach must have completed Scottish Rugby's online RugbyRight course and be qualified to a minimum standard of UKCC Level 2/Aspiring coach programme (or equivalent); **AND**
3. An application be submitted to Scottish Rugby by the player's Club or School reflecting details of the player's experience, injury history and benefits to the player in playing in proposed age band; **AND**
4. Player has had a physical maturity test undertaken by a Scottish Rugby representative which confirms suitability to play at a lower age level – arranged once application is received.

See appendix 1 for further details.

Height and Weight trigger values for players requesting to play in a low age band:

Age Group	Boys Height <i>Player should be less than the height listed below in order to apply</i>	Boys Weight <i>Player should be less than the weight listed below in order to apply</i>	Girls Height (cm) <i>Player should be less than the height listed below in order to apply</i>	Girls Weight (kg) <i>Player should be less than the weight listed below in order to apply</i>
U12	139 cm	31 kg	140 cm	32 kg
U13	143 cm	34 kg	145 cm	35 kg
U14	150 cm	40 kg	150 cm	40 kg
U15	157 cm	45 kg	156 cm	44 kg
U16	163 cm	50 kg	158 cm	48 kg
U17	168 cm	55 kg	159 cm	50 kg

All those under the jurisdiction of Scottish Rugby must comply with all Age Banding Policies.

Key Principles

- Every participant in the game has a responsibility to comply with Scottish Rugby policies and procedures.
- Scottish Rugby, and all those governed by Scottish Rugby, shall follow best practice in relation to Player Welfare.
- A player proposing to play out with their age band rugby may not do so (and is not eligible to participate in Scottish Rugby competitions) until they have met the required criteria and written approval has been received from Scottish Rugby.
- For players born in June, July and August (and will therefore be moving to an older age grade as of 1st September), players can transition into their new eligible age group for pre-season training and matches without the need for dispensation, **as long as 2-year banding continues to be observed.**
- It is permissible for players who are U16 to mix and play with those who are U17 without dispensation, provided 2-year age banding is adhered to.
- All players, coaches and other team management members must follow the terms of this policy, together with any further guidance published by Scottish Rugby in relation to Player Welfare.

Roles and Responsibilities

To ensure an environment in which all participants can enjoy their rugby, everyone involved in the game must work together. It is EVERYONE'S responsibility to contribute to fair competition and to the wellbeing of players and others involved in the game.

Scottish Rugby Will:

- Develop and publish a policy that sets out our core age banding requirements (including in relation to those players wishing to play outwith Scottish Rugby's designated age bands). We will ensure that the Policy and any associated guidance is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Require that member clubs comply with the Policy as part of the *Club Investment Fund Standards*.
- Provide education materials, advice and assistance in relation to the Regulation to players and their clubs.
- Manage and respond to requests, queries and concerns in an efficient and fair manner.
- Take disciplinary action against those who breach the Policy.

Member Clubs Will:

- Ensure that their players, coaches, officers and other club officials are aware of Scottish Rugby's Boy's Age Banding policy.
- Ensure that all of their club's players and club officials comply with the terms of the Policy and any associated guidance.
- Report any suspected breaches of the Regulation.

Players, Coaches And Team Officials Will:

- Abide by the terms of Scottish Rugby's Boy's Age Banding policy and any associated guidance.
- Players joining a club from another club/school or Union who are not yet 18 years old should not assume that approval to play adult rugby remains. Where a player who was previously approved to play adult rugby moves to a different club, they shall ensure that the appropriate approval from Scottish Rugby is in place and undertake a risk assessment for the new club.
- Ensure that the game is played in accordance with Scottish Rugby's Core Values.
- Take responsibility for their own welfare and that of other players.

Definitions

Club	Means any club, team or other body (as the context may require) which participates in a Scottish Rugby National Competition
Discipline Manager	Means the person, having appropriate knowledge and expertise, who is appointed by Scottish Rugby to act on its behalf in this capacity in matters arising under this Regulation.
Disciplinary Rules	Means the Scottish Rugby Disciplinary Rules, as issued from time to time by Scottish Rugby.

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Misconduct	Shall have the meaning ascribed to it in Scottish Rugby Disciplinary Rules.
National Competition	Means those Scottish Rugby league and knock-out competitions designated by the Board from time to time and listed as such in National Competition Rules.
Player	Means any person who is named by a Club to participate in a Match.
Scottish Rugby	Means Scottish Rugby Union Limited and Scottish Rugby Limited, and their successors from time to time.

Contact Us

Advice and further information with regard to *the Boy's Age Banding policy* may be requested from:

Graham Ireland

Head of Regulation
Scottish Gas Murrayfield
Roseburn Street
Edinburgh EH12 5PJ
T: 0131 346 5004
E: graham.ireland@sru.org.uk

Vicky Cox

Head of Competitions & Compliance
Scottish Gas Murrayfield
Roseburn Street
Edinburgh EH12 5PJ
E: vicky.cox@sru.org.uk

Age Banding Mailbox

Scottish Gas Murrayfield
Roseburn Street
Edinburgh EH12 5PJ
E: age.banding@sru.org.uk

Raising a Concern

Where a concern arises in the relation to a potential breach of the Boy's Age Banding Policy Rugby policy, or where there is concern that best practice is not being followed, the matter may be referred in confidence to Scottish Rugby Union's Discipline Manager.

Policy Amendment Process

Changes to the Boys Age Banding policy shall be approved by the Chief Medical Officer and Club Rugby Board.

Appendix 1

Process For All Applications to Play Outwith Eligible Age Band

Applications to play in an age banding other than players' eligible age band will be made using the appropriate application form. The application form will be submitted online via Scottish Rugby's User Management System, SCRUMS. Supporting material such as tackle assessment video and evidence of a strength and conditioning/physical conditioning programme must also be uploaded with the application.

On receipt of the application, SCRUMS will email player/parent, coach and club/school official for confirmation that application can proceed to the next stage.

When all confirmation has been received, the application is deemed complete* and it will pass to the next stage:

- Tackle Assessments – Videos (submitted upon application for 15-year-old into U18 and 17-year-old into Adult applications) will be assessed by a Scottish Rugby representative to gauge the tackle readiness of the player. Each tackle assessment will be assessed against a validated template. It is anticipated that tackle assessments will be reviewed and assessed 14 days after completed application is received and results logged onto SCRUMS. Feedback will be sent to the player and coach if application is unsuccessful to allow coaching support in this area.
- Physical Maturity Assessments – for 15-year-old into U18 rugby or Play Down applications, the player must undertake a physical maturity assessment. The Player's parent will be contacted so this can be arranged once the application form is received. The physical maturity assessment will consist of height and weight verification and a calculation of peak height velocity as well as testing to calculate skeletal maturity. This will be with a Sonic Bone device.
- Those applying to play up into adult rugby and play in either prop or hooker positions, players will be invited for a neck strength test at an assessment centre as below. The neck strength assessment used the Gatherer Systems harness system (<https://www.gatherersystems.com/harness>) to assess a player's peak force and fatigue rating. After a neck strength assessment, players may present muscle soreness for 24hrs and should therefore alter training and playing programmes accordingly.

The physical maturity and neck strength assessments will be undertaken by Scottish Rugby appointed staff. Assessment centres will be hosted at Regional centres and each centre will host an assessment at least once per month. Players will be offered a place at their nearest centre but can opt to take an available appointment at another centre if they choose to do so. Dates for assessment centres will be shown on SCRUMS.

Once an assessment is completed the results will be entered onto SCRUMS within 48 hours.

Timelines

Successful applicants who fulfil the criteria detailed above, and pass the relevant assessments, will receive confirmation via SCRUMS in the following time frames:

- 17-year-old into Adult Rugby – within 14 days of completed* application received if not playing front row. Applications to play in front row will take up to 4 weeks to receive front row clearance but may play up earlier in non-front row positions if cleared.
- 15-year-old into U18 Rugby – within 4 weeks of completed* application received
- Playing Down – within 4 weeks of completed* application received

Playing in proposed age band is not allowed until SCRUMS has been updated to reflect this and notification received by the Club or School.

Play Up applications that are not successful will receive feedback and may reapply after 3 months.