

Schools and Youth National Competition Rules 2026/27

Rule No.	New or revised rule in SYNCR 26/27	Explanation / Purpose
N/A	<u>New Section</u> INTRODUCTION AND CONTENTS	This new section aims to enhance understanding about which competitions are covered by the SYNCR and the structure of the rules document.
3.6	<u>New Rule</u> FIXTURES: Date and Time of Kick Off <i>3.6 Teams must notify the opposition as early as practically possible if they have a need for Player Matching (due to having fewer than 15 players available (13 for U13)), or a Development Match may be required.</i>	Change to Draft 1: Red text highlights a change in language to remove definitive deadline. Rationale being player availability may vary right up to the day of the fixture. This new rule aims to reinforce best practice and install the option to raise a complaint if expectations aren't managed effectively,
3.9	<u>Revision</u> FIXTURES: Cancelled and Postponed Matches <i>3.9 If a Match has been cancelled due to ground conditions, or as a consequence of government advice, the Home Team must inform the relevant Competition Administrator without delay:</i> <i>3.9.1 Conference/Pool/League based Matches: The Match shall ordinarily be rescheduled to the next available fixture date free of Competition fixtures. If there are no free dates of Competition Teams are encouraged to agree a date no later than the final date of competition for that Conference, League or Group. If re-arranged by the Teams, as there are no free fixture dates, the date must be notified to the Competition Administrator at least seven days in advance of the re-arranged date. In accordance with NCR 3.4 the Competitions Committee reserves the absolute right to reschedule any Match.</i> <i>3.9.2 Knock-out Matches: Where a knock-out Match is postponed or abandoned before 75% of the normal playing time has elapsed, it shall be rescheduled to the designated standby date. If a designated standby date hasn't been assigned the Competitions Administrator</i>	3.9 Revision streamlines the rules by incorporating reference to postponement due to government advice (allowing removal of 25/26 NCR 3.9). 3.9.1 Revisions provide clarification that, where possible, postponed fixtures will be automatically rescheduled to available standby dates; and if it's not possible teams should seek alternative solutions to retain the fixture as part of the competition. 3.9.2 Revisions provide clarification about the rescheduling process if a Knock-out Match is postponed.

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	<i>shall liaise with all parties and reschedule the match for a date as early as possible. Where necessary the Competition Administrator may ask the Competitions Committee to fix the place, date and time of kick-off, which ruling shall be final and binding on all parties. Where the requirements of the competition necessitate the Competitions Committee may resolve that the winner of any Match shall be determined by the toss of a coin.</i>	
4.3	Revision THE PLAYERS: Eligibility <i>4.3 Other than as set out within the Rules/Regulations or with the written permission of the relevant Competition Committee:</i> <i>4.3.1 a Player may not play in Matches for more than two Clubs, and one School; and.</i> <i>4.3.2 a player may not play for two Teams in the same competition.</i>	4.3.1: Revision increases the number of clubs a player can participate for in competition from one to two. This change has been introduced in conjunction with the Dual Registration rules below (4.8-4-10) 4.3.2: is an additional revision for Draft 2 to provide clarity that a player cannot play for a second club in the same competition, without written permission from the Competitions Committee.
4.5	New Rule THE PLAYERS: Eligibility <i>4.5 In school competitions a school may seek the Competitions Committee's permission to field a Player that is enrolled on a temporary basis for less than the entire academic year. Ordinarily permission shall only be granted if engagement with a broad educational opportunity, including tangible academic elements, can be demonstrated.</i>	Rule introduced to replace the Draft 1 Schools Cup regulation that made pupils on international exchange, or otherwise temporarily enrolled, ineligible without exception. Rationale: Relaxation of the Draft 1 position to recognise that established international exchange programmes provide broad educational opportunities, of which sport is only one element. The rule also safeguards against temporary enrolment being used primarily for sporting advantage.
4.8 – 4.10	New Rule THE PLAYERS: Dual Registration <i>4.8 A Player's Primary and Secondary Clubs must play in different League competitions.</i> <i>4.9 A dual-registered Player may not play for their lower-placed Club in any of its last three Matches unless at least 50% of their previous Matches that season have been for the lower-placed side or where the Player has obtained the prior written permission of the Competitions Committee.</i>	Introduction of Dual Registration for age grade competition is being considered to create more meaningful playing opportunities; - for individual players that may seek opportunities through two clubs; and - for the game in general as a broader approach to player eligibility has potential to improve fixture fulfilment and/or quality across the whole programme.

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	<i>4.10 No more than five Secondary Registered Players may be included in the Match squad of their lower placed Club.</i>	Rules 4.9 and 4.10 provide safeguards that protect integrity of competition, mirroring the approach taken in adult competition. Dual registration has operated successfully in adult competition for over 15 years.
4.11 – 4.12	<u>New Rule</u> THE PLAYERS: Transfer Deadline <i>4.11 Scottish Rugby shall set a transfer deadline date each season (see Appendix 1).</i> <i>4.12 Any Player being Dual Registered, or being transferred between Clubs after the transfer deadline, may not participate for their new Club in a Competition unless the Player receives written permission from the Competitions Committee to do so. Permission will normally only be granted in exceptional circumstances (for example a new player to the game, or a non-rugby related change of domicile or other reasonable change of circumstances which makes it impossible or impractical).</i> <i>Appendix 1: 2026/27 Transfer deadline - 28 September 2026</i>	New rule that replaces a revision in Draft 1 that installed a 17 August 2026 registration deadline within NCR 4.1. Rationale for change: - Standalone rule enhances clarity and mirrors approach adopted in adult competition - Later deadline provides more flexibility removing potential barriers to participation and better reflects the needs of youth game
4.13	<u>Deletion</u> THE PLAYERS: Age Restrictions for Team Selection <i>4.13 A Player may not play or be selected to play outwith their age band unless they have received written exemption from Scottish Rugby to do so, granted in accordance with Scottish Rugby's Age Banding policies.</i>	Current wording is open to misinterpretation as the Age Banding Policy allows all players to play up one age band without written permission. Deletion favoured over revision as this rule is effectively duplication of rules 4.13 & 4.14 which already makes compliance with Age Banding Policy a requirement of the competitions.
4.18	<u>New Rule</u> THE PLAYERS: Registration and De-Registration <i>4.18 A Player may be registered to only one Primary League Club and one Secondary League Club. A Player's Primary League Club shall ordinarily be the Club with which the Player trains and plays most frequently. The Player may ask their Primary League Club to also</i>	Rule introduced in conjunction with the Dual Registration rules. Rule mirrors position taken in adult competition.

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	<i>register them with a Secondary League Club. The Player shall not be eligible to play for their Primary or Secondary Club until their name appears on that body's list of active registered Players.</i>	
4.19	<u>Revision</u> THE PLAYERS: Registration and De-Registration <i>4.16 Incoming Players requiring International Clearance shall not be eligible to participate until Scottish Rugby has provided written confirmation of the completion of the Clearance process. International Clearance is not a requirement for players that remain in full time education.</i>	Revision included to provide relevant information from Scottish Rugby's Policy on International Clearance
5.10	<u>Revision</u> THE TEAMS: Number of Starting Players (Girls) <i>5.10 A Team may start a Match with less than 15 Players (or less than 13 in U16 Matches) but not less than 12 Players in U18 Matches, and 10 players in U16 Matches, (not less than 10 Players in U16), subject to it fielding at least five Players in the scrum at all times. In the event that the number of Players in either Team be reduced to fewer than 12 (U16 10) in a Scoring Match (for whatever reason), the Match shall proceed as a Development Match.</i>	This revision aligns the competition rules with the revised Age Grade Law Variations (AGLV), which designate 15-a-side as the standard format for U16 girls' rugby. To support player participation and fixture fulfilment, the AGLV will continue to provide Game On variations for reduced numbers (up to 13-a-side), and the minimum number of players required to fulfil a competition U16 fixture will remain 10 during Year 1 of the revised AGLV.
5.15	<u>New Rule</u> THE TEAMS: Replacements / Substitutes <i>5.15 Teams are permitted to make an unlimited number of rolling substitutions.</i>	Revision to clarify place of rolling substitutions following an unintended consequence from a revision made in Schools & Youth National Competition Rules 2025/26.
12	<u>Deletion</u> APPEALS PROCEDURE	Appeals Procedure shall be removed from all Scottish Rugby Competitions Rules and will sit as a standalone document.
Appendix 1	<u>Deletion</u> Boy's Conference and League Regulations: Structure of Competitions <i>2.2.2.2 Schools shall be required to declare if they intend to field a second team, on an age group specific basis, and a Participation Match fixture schedule may be issued by the Competition Secretary.</i>	Rule deleted as 2nd XV/B team Participation Matches are no longer included in Schools Conference competitions i.e. no points are awarded to B team fixtures. Any B team fixtures scheduled in alignment with the Conferences shall be played as friendlies. Background:

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	Reference to 2 nd XV and B Teams have also been deleted from rules contained in Sections 5 and 7 (THE TEAMS and THE MATCH) of the Competition Rules.	Schools, and the competition structures, have evolved over the years leading to fewer B team fixtures. As such a tipping point has arrived where points awarded to B team fixtures have potential to weigh too heavily on final placings in the overall conference table.
Appendix 1	<u>New Rule</u> Boy's Conference and League Regulations: Team Selection <i>6.2 A Player may not play for their 2nd or 'B' XV in any of its last three Matches unless at least 50% of their previous Matches that season have been for the 2nd or B XV, or where the Player has obtained the prior written permission of the Competitions Committee.</i>	Rule introduced in SYNCR 26/27 Final Draft following confirmation that 2nd/B XV teams will participate in regional league competitions. Rule provides safeguards that protect integrity of competition when a club or school participates in a National League/Conference and also fields a 2nd/B XV in a Regional League competition. The position taken is consistent with the approach adopted within the new Dual Registration rules that allow a player to participate in both a National and a Regional League, for two different clubs.
Appendix 1	<u>Revision</u> Boy's Conference and League Regulations: The Players <i>7.1 In a Regional League or Conference match, if a Team is unable to start with 15 players, or with a contested scrum, they may borrow players from other clubs or schools participating in a Regional League or Conference competition.</i> <i>7.2 A Team may borrow a maximum of five players, or the number required to:</i> <i>7.2.1 Reach a matchday squad of 15 players: or</i> <i>7.2.2 enable the match to start with a contested scrum, whichever is lower.</i>	Revisions introduce additional restrictions to limit the competitive advantage at stake through application of this rule, and to protect playing opportunities for players that solely play for the team that need to borrow players. Revision also broadens the rule to help retain fully competitive fixtures if a team is unable to start with a contested scrum.
Appendix 1	<u>Deletion</u> Borders Town Conference Regulations	Borders Town Conference has been replaced by a new competition programme that is covered by the Boy's Conference and League Regulations.
Appendix 1	<u>New Rule</u> Boy's Schools Cup Regulations & Boy's Youth Cup Regulations: Format of Competitions <i>3.4 As far as practicably possible a Team drawn away in round 1 of a National Cup competition shall be drawn at home in round 2.</i>	Home advantage will continue to be decided by an open draw in the later stages of the Cup competitions, but this rule would seek to share the financial burden of playing away more evenly in the early rounds.

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Appendix 1	<u>New Rule</u> Boy's Schools Cup Regulations & Boy's Youth Cup Regulations: Format of Competitions <i>3.5 Should a Team be unable to fulfil a match they shall play no further part in any level of the competiiton structure.</i>	Additional rule to clarify that teams that fail to fulfil a fixture in the National Cup competitions do not progress to a lower level of the competition through the waterfall structure.
Appendix 1	<u>Revision</u> Boy's Schools Cup and Boy's Youth Cup: Format of Competitions <i>5.1 A player may not participate for more than one Team in the Cup competitions outlined in Appendix 2.</i> <i>5.2 If an U16 player, who is also eligible to play U18 rugby (in accordance with Age Banding policy), participates for their school's U18 Team in the Schools Cup competitions, that player shall no longer be eligible to play for the school's U16 team in the Schools Cup competitions.</i> <i>5.3 If due to injury or player unavailability an U16 Team is unable to field a full squad (22 players) of U16 players, or start a match with a contested scrum, a player that is tied to their school's U18 team (in accordance with 5.2) may seek dispensation from the Competitions Committee to play in that Schools Cup match (considered on a match-by-match basis). If permission is granted that player must not start the U16 Cup fixture unless the team has less than 15 players available.</i>	Revision highlights a change to Draft 1 and 2 that reflects a move back to the rule that was in place for season 25/26. Position taken in the rule aims to protect integrity of the U16 Cup competitions by enhancing consistency of squad selection throughout the competition, while preserving playing opportunities for players that are only eligible to play for the U16 Team. Rule 5.3 retains the opportunity for players to become untied from the U18 team to help retain an U16 Cup fixture, or to enhance fixture quality by reducing reliance on U15 players playing up.
Appendix 1	<u>Revision</u> Girl's League Regulations: The Players <i>4.1 If a team is unable to start a National or Regional Girls League match with 15 players (or 13 players at U16 level), or with a contested scrum, they may borrow players from another club (or clubs) participating in a Girls League competition. For clarity, these borrowed players do not need to be registered to the borrowing team.</i>	Revisions mirror the changes proposed for the equivalent rule in the Boy's Conference and League Regulations. Revisions introduce additional restrictions to limit the competitive advantage at stake through application of this rule, and to protect playing opportunities for players that solely play for the team that need to borrow players.

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	<i>4.2 A Team may borrow a maximum of five players, or the number required to:</i> <i>4.2.1 Reach a matchday squad of 15 players (13 for U16); or</i> <i>4.14.2.2 enable the match to start with a contested scrum, whichever is lower.</i>	Revision also broadens the rule to help retain fully competitive fixtures if a team is unable to start with a contested scrum.
Appendix 1	<u>Revision</u> Girl's Youth Cup: Format of Competitions <i>5.1 A player may not participate for more than one Team in the Girls National Cup competitions.</i> <i>5.2 If an U16 player, who is also eligible to play U18 rugby (in accordance with Age Banding policy), participates for their club's U18 Team in the Girls' Cup competitions, that player shall no longer be eligible to play for the club's U16 team in the Girls' Cup competitions.</i> <i>5.3 If due to injury or player unavailability an U16 Team is unable to field a full squad (20 players), or start a match with a contested scrum, a player that is tied to their club's U18 team (in accordance with 5.2) may seek dispensation from the Competitions Committee to play in that Girls' Cup match (considered on a match-by-match basis). If permission is granted that player must not start the U16 Cup fixture unless the team has less than 13 players available.</i>	Revisions mirror the Final Draft position for the equivalent rule in the Boy's National Cup competitions.