



**RFU ACE LEAGUE REGULATIONS
2023-2024**

PART A: COMPETITION REGULATIONS SCHEDULE

A. Competition(s)	<p>1. For the purpose of these regulations, ‘Competition’ shall mean: RFU Academy Colleges & Education League</p>
B. Competition Organiser	<p>1. The Competition will be organised by the RFU Competitions (Professional) Department on behalf of the RFU.</p>
C. Disputes Committee	<p>1. Disputes Committee (Professional Competitions).</p>
D. Competition Format	<p>1. The Competition Organiser will determine the precise structure of the Competition once the number of participating teams is known.</p> <p>2. The Competition Organiser will carry out the draws. The first named team in the draw is the Home team and the second named team is the Away team irrespective of where the game is played.</p> <p>3. League points will be awarded as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 points will be awarded for a win; • 2 points will be awarded for a draw; • 1 point will be awarded to a team that loses a match by 7 points or less; • 1 point will be awarded to a team scoring 4 tries or more in a match; • At the Disputes Committee’s discretion, 1 point may be deducted for failing to submit a Match Card and/or a Team Sheet in accordance with G(4), G(5) and Part B, Regulation 3.2 after each match. <p>4. The position of each team within the pool will be determined by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) league points; b) match wins; c) match points difference; d) match points for; and e) number of try bonus points in the Pool stage. <p>5. In each of a) to e) above, the team with the greater league points, match wins, positive match points difference or positive match points for, will be placed higher than any team with fewer league points etc.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. In the event that, having applied a) to e) above, two teams are still equal, the position of the teams in the Pool stage of the Competition will be determined by applying a) to e) to the matches involving the equal teams. In the event two or more teams are still equal, lots will be drawn to determine final Pool stage positions. 7. Any entrant conceding a match will face sanction (including possible disqualification) by the Disputes Committee. 8. All Stage 1 & Stage 2 fixtures should kick off at 14:00 on the scheduled fixture date, unless alternative arrangements can be agreed between both teams and approved by the Competition Organiser. 9. The Competition Organiser will determine the date, kick off time and venue of the final and final placing play-off fixtures.
E. Entrant Eligibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Competition will be open to those colleges as invited by the Competition Organiser. 2. Entrants will only be allowed to enter at the discretion of the Competition Organiser. 3. Any Entrants participating in the Schools Cup Competition will not be eligible to participate in this Competition.
F. Player Eligibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Players must be under the age of 18 at midnight on 31st August of the effective season to be eligible to play in the Competition, save in respect of players playing down in accordance with RFU Regulation 15.4. 2. Players taking part in the Competition must be on the roll of the participating educational establishment on the 30th September of the effective season and in attendance at the participating educational establishment, unless otherwise agreed by the Competition Organiser. 3. Under 16s can only play in an Under 18 match pursuant to RFU Regulation 15.
G. Match Management	<p>Squad List</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before the first match of the season each entrant will submit a squad list of players that may be considered for selection during the Competition, containing the following information; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Entrant Name b) Full Name of each Player c) Date of Birth of each Player d) Whether the Player is Front Row (tick if applicable) e) School or College attended by each Player before joining ACE School or College <p>Match Day Squad</p>

2. A squad of no fewer than 20 players (15 starting players and 5 substitutes/replacements) and no more than 23 players (15 starting players and 8 substitutes/replacements) can be named for each match.
3. Squad compositions, including minimum number of front row players, must be in accordance with World Rugby Law 3.

Team Sheet

4. Each entrant must send a team sheet of their selected match day squad and confirmation of venue and kick-off time to the Competition Organiser at least 24 hours before kick-off, in every match of the competition.

Match Card

5. Each entrant in every match of the Competition must complete and retain a copy of a Match Card, containing the following information;
 - a) Match details (Home team, Away team, full time score, number of tries, venue, date, Referee & physio)
 - b) Full name of each Player selected in Match Day Squad
 - c) Whether the Player is an Under 19 age group Player (tick if applicable)
 - d) Whether the Player is Front Row (tick if applicable)
 - e) Substitutions from the Match
 - f) Discipline Record from the Match
 - g) Scorers

Each entrant must also submit a copy to the Competition Organiser, within 24 hours of the final whistle of each match, signed by the Team Manager.

Match

6. Matches will be 35 minutes each way. Half-time will be 5 minutes, with both teams staying on the field of play.
7. Should a fifty point differential occur at any time during a match, then the referee may end the match and the result at that time will stand.
8. If a match is drawn then Part B, Regulation 5 will apply, with the exception of Part B Regulation 5.2, which shall be disapplied. Instead, if scores are level at the end of a match in a final placing play-off (other than the final), the following order of events shall be applied in order to determine the winner of a drawn match: number of tries, number of conversions from tries, first try, first points. If this does not produce a winner or the score is 0-0, the final placing position will be shared.

Match Officials

9. For each game in Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the competition, the Home team must, unless otherwise notified by the RFU, contact their local referee society who will appoint an independent Referee, and notify the home team of the appointment.

	<p>10. The Home team must advise the Referee that the appointment is to a Competition fixture and advise him/her of the Competition Regulations and appropriate Law variations.</p> <p>11. The RFU will appoint an independent Referee for the final and final placing play-off fixtures. The RFU will also appoint two Assistant Referees to the final only.</p>
<p>H. Notification of Results</p>	<p>1. The Home team must inform the RFU Competition Organiser via a completed Match Card within 24 hours of the end of the match.</p> <p>RFU ACE League – Zach Ferris Email: ZachFerris@rfu.com Tel: 07510 374436</p>
<p>I. Other Competition Specific Regulations</p>	<p>Medical</p> <p>1. It is the responsibility of both Entrants in Competition Matches to ensure that each Entrant has:</p> <p>a. an appropriately qualified healthcare practitioner present to attend to Players, and the Referee, before, during the Match, at half-time and immediately after the Match. To be considered an appropriately qualified healthcare practitioner the individual must be qualified in accordance with RFU guidelines and/or has undertaken a minimum of the RFU's Immediate Care in Sport Course Level 2 qualification or equivalent; and</p> <p>b. an Immediate Care in Sport Course Level 2 or Level 3 trauma bag, a defibrillator, collars, splints and split scoop.</p> <p>2. It is the responsibility of the Home team to ensure that reasonable medical facilities are available for the use of such medical professionals to include planning of onward emergency care and ambulance access in accordance with RFU Regulation 9.</p> <p>Analysis Filming</p> <p>3. It is the responsibility of the Home team to ensure that every competition match is recorded for analysis purposes. Minimum Operating Standards for filming must be followed and video footage must be uploaded to Elite Hub within 24 hours (12 hours desirable) of the final whistle.</p>



PART B: COMPETITION REGULATIONS

(APPLICABLE TO NATIONAL AGE GRADE COMPETITIONS, NATIONAL COMMUNITY MEN AND WOMEN COMPETITIONS AND COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITIONS)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. These Competition Regulations, together with the above Schedule and any attached Annexes (together the “Competition Regulations”), set out in full the regulations that shall apply to this Competition.
- 1.2. These Regulations apply to the Competition in the 2023-24 season and are effective from 1st August 2023.
- 1.3. All matches must be played in accordance with these Regulations, World Rugby Laws and Regulations (including any variations, trials and other formats that may be adopted by the RFU) and RFU Rules and Regulations. In the event of any conflict between a provision of these Regulations and the RFU or World Rugby Rules and Regulations, these Regulations will prevail in respect of that provision.
- 1.4. Unless otherwise specifically defined in these Regulations, any definitions will have the meanings set out in the RFU Regulation 1 (Definitions) which is available on the RFU website.

Covid-19 Variations and Standards

- 1.5. In order to cater for the ongoing impact of the global Covid-19 crisis on rugby union in England (and such other infectious disease and/or public health emergency), Covid-19 regulatory variations have been agreed and put in place to ensure that, as far as possible, the regulations are flexible enough to deal with and adapt to the ever-changing Covid-19 (or other, as applicable) landscape. This flexibility needs to be balanced against the overriding objective of the RFU to deliver meaningful and authentic competition and maintain the integrity of the competition and to ensure the player welfare is at the forefront.
- 1.6. These Variations are set out in RFU Regulation 22. In the event of any conflict between Regulation 22 and these Regulations, RFU Regulation 22 will prevail.

2. Competition Organisation

- 2.1. The Competition will be administered by the Competition Organiser who shall manage the delivery of the Competition.
- 2.2. The Competition Organiser shall have discretion to decide on matters not provided for in, as well as on the interpretation of, these Regulations in the context of the Competition. This discretion shall include the interpretation of these Regulations in accordance with the underlying principles and intent (insofar as it can be ascertained) of the relevant regulation and in the interests of rugby union football.

- 2.3. Any interested party may seek clarification of any of these Regulations by submitting a question to the Competition Organiser in writing.
- 2.4. Any party affected by a decision of the Competition Organiser on matters not provided for in the Competition Regulations shall have a right of appeal against such decision in accordance with Regulation 11 below.
- 2.5. In the discharge of its responsibilities, the Competition Organiser may further delegate some or all of the powers contained within these Regulations to any individual member(s) or staff member(s) of the Competition Organiser.

3. Match Management

Squad Lists

- 3.1. If required by the RFU, before the first match of the season each Entrant will submit a squad list of players that may be considered for selection during the Competition in such form and containing such information as may be required by the RFU and the term “**Squad List**” shall be construed accordingly.

Match Cards

- 3.2. If required by the RFU, each Entrant must complete and submit a match card and/or a team sheet in such form and containing such information as required by the RFU and the terms “Match Card” and “Team Sheet” shall be construed accordingly.
- 3.3. Each Team Manager must sign the Match Card (where indicated) confirming the accuracy of the details being submitted to the Competition Organiser.
- 3.4. Each entrant must ensure that information provided to the RFU (which may include a Match Card and/or Team Sheet) is accurate and legible. Failure to submit, or late submission of the foregoing, will render an entrant liable to sanction. The provision of false or misleading information on players or replacements is a serious breach of these Regulations and may give rise to a severe penalty.

Half Game Rule

- 3.5. In respect of Age Grade Competitions, the Half Game Rule will apply to all matches in accordance with RFU Regulation 15.12. Suspected breaches of this regulation will be referred to the Disputes Committee in accordance with the process outlined in Regulation 9.2.

Matches

- 3.6. The home team is responsible for arranging the match at a suitable venue (defined as the usual home pitch, or alternative school/club/artificial pitch) for all matches with the exception of those listed in the Regulations Schedule.
- 3.7. Matches must be played by the end of the week in which a match is scheduled, as detailed by the Competition Organiser. Should this not be possible, the home team must contact the Competition Organiser to apply for dispensation to play on an alternative date.
- 3.8. The Competition Organiser retains the right to specify the date and kick-off time for any match in the Competition.
- 3.9. In all matches in the Competition, Entrants must select their strongest squad of eligible players.

Kit

- 3.10. Each team must ensure that there is no clash of colours and that all its kit complies with World Rugby Regulations.
- 3.11. The home team must change shirts in the event of a clash of colour.

4. Replacements

- 4.1. Rolling Substitutions are permitted in all matches. A player who has been substituted may later replace any player, whether or not that player has been injured (subject to Regulation 4.2).
- 4.2. Subject to 4.4 below, if on any occasion a front-row player requires to be replaced and their team cannot (for any reason, including injury, temporary blood injury, temporary exclusion following a yellow card, or permanent exclusion following a red card) provide a replacement, or another suitably trained and experienced player from the nominated squad, to enable the match to continue safely with contested scrums, the Referee, having made enquiry of and having confirmed this fact with the manager of the team (or such other person nominated by the Entrant as the person responsible for the team), the match will continue with uncontested scrums. The team concerned shall not be entitled to replace the player whose departure caused the uncontested scrums and (subject to Regulation 4.4 below) the final result will stand. On return to the field of play of the front-row player who had been temporarily excluded or injured, the Match shall continue with contested scrums.
- 4.3. In the event that a Referee decides to continue the match with uncontested scrums on the grounds of safety, because the Referee cannot safely manage the scrums otherwise, the final result will stand, subject to Regulation 4.4.
- 4.4. The Competition Organiser may review the circumstances where a match is completed with or contains uncontested scrums and in its sole discretion may impose penalties in accordance with Regulation 10, subject to the right of appeal set out in Regulation 11.

5. Drawn Matches

- 5.1. Matches in a League Format (if applicable)
In the event that the scores are level at the end of the match, the match will be considered a draw. There will be no extra time.
- 5.2. Matches in a Knock-Out Format (other than the final)
Unless otherwise specified in Part A of these Regulations, in the event that the scores are level at the end of a match, the winner of the match will be the team that has scored most tries. If this does not produce a winner, the team that has scored the most conversions from tries will. If this still does not produce a winner or the score is 0-0, the away team shall proceed to the next round.
- 5.3. Final
Unless otherwise specified in Part A of these Regulations, if scores are level at the end of the match, the following order of events shall be applied in order to determine the winner of a drawn match: number of tries, number of conversions from tries, first try, first points. If this does not produce a winner or the score is 0-0, the title will be shared.

6. Non-fulfilled, Postponed or Abandoned Matches

- 6.1. **Weather Conditions (including bad light)**
 - 6.1.1. Postponed Match

If weather conditions (including bad light) prevent a match being played, despite the teams having followed any Postponed Match Notification Procedure as may be notified to the participating Entrant by the Competition Organiser, the match will be played at a later date unless the Competition Organiser exceptionally, and in its absolute discretion, agrees/specifies otherwise.

6.1.2. Abandoned with Fewer than 50 minutes played

If the match is abandoned solely because of the weather conditions (including bad light) or serious injury to a player when fewer than 50 minutes have been played, the match will be replayed unless the Competition Organiser exceptionally, and in its absolute discretion, agrees/specifies otherwise.

6.1.3. Abandoned with 50 or more minutes played

If a match is abandoned solely because of weather conditions (including bad light) or serious injury to a player when 50 or more minutes have been played, the score at the moment of abandonment shall stand and be deemed the final score in the match. The Referee's decision as to the necessity for abandonment and the number of minutes played at the moment of abandonment shall be final.

6.2. Other Reasons

If the Referee finds it necessary to abandon a match for any reason other than weather conditions (including bad light) or serious injury to a player, irrespective of the number of minutes played, the result of that match shall be reviewed by the Competition Organiser. The Competition Organiser may order the match to be replayed and/or impose such other sanction as it deems appropriate. The Referee's report must be submitted on why play was curtailed.

6.3. Re-scheduling or re-arranging Matches

A Match shall be played/replayed on a date specified by the RFU.

6.4. Failure to Fulfil Obligations

All Entrants must fulfil their Matches in compliance with these Regulations. If the Disputes Committee considers that an Entrant has unjustifiably failed to fulfil its obligations, it shall have regard to Appendix 3 of RFU Regulation 6 and the Entrant may be liable to have Competition points deducted and/or ordered to have the match replayed or such other sanctions imposed as deemed appropriate by the Disputes Committee.

7. Match Officials

7.1. The responsibility for providing Match Officials for each match will be in accordance with the Competition Regulations Schedule.

8. On-field Disciplinary Process

8.1. The RFU has the power to investigate all allegations of foul play or misconduct on or off the field of play, and all such matters shall be dealt with in accordance with RFU Regulation 19. Non-compliance with any such investigation may result in an Entrant or person's exclusion from the Competition.

8.2. When any player is sent off or cited in any match in the Competition, the Disciplinary Regulations as set out in RFU Regulation 19 will apply.

8.3. In respect of Age Grade Competitions, the discipline process as set out in Appendix 6 of RFU Regulation 19 will apply.

- 8.4. Any rugby disciplinary incident that arises in a School, College or Age Grade Club match must be reported to the CBAGDS within 48 hours by the school, college, club disciplinary officer or person(s) with delegated authority. Failure to do so could result in the removal of an Entrant from the Competition.
- 8.5. Each Entrant is responsible for ensuring that its players, spectators and coaches are fully aware of the RFU Core Values. Any proven incidents of Match Official abuse or unauthorised entry into the field of play by any individual associated to that Entrant, could result in the removal of the Entrant from the Competition.

9. Disputes and Breaches of Regulations

- 9.1. Subject to the right of appeal in accordance with RFU Regulation 19, the Disputes Committee (as defined in Regulation 1) shall have the power to discipline any Entrant or person for breach of any of these Regulations and/or any RFU Regulations. Ignorance of any such regulations cannot be deemed an excuse in the event of breach.
- 9.2. Subject to 9.3, any matters alleged to be in breach of these Regulations and/or RFU Regulations shall be referred immediately to the Disputes Committee; c/o the Competition Organiser within 24 hours following the conclusion of a match. Written confirmation must be sent to the Competition Organiser within 48 hours of the conclusion of the match setting out the grounds of the complaint/breach in full.
- 9.3. The RFU Head of Discipline shall have the ability to refer any alleged breach of these Regulations and/or RFU Regulations to the Disputes Committee; c/o the Competition Organiser at any time after the conclusion of a match.
- 9.4. The Disputes Committee shall have jurisdiction to impose such penalty as it thinks fit including, but not limited to, financial sanctions, disqualification and suspension. For the avoidance of doubt, this power shall include a power to impose any sanction for breaching these or any other RFU Regulation, in line with tariffs and guidelines where these exist.

10. Sanctions

- 10.1. If the Disputes Committee finds a breach of a Regulation has occurred, it may impose such sanction as it considers appropriate.
- 10.2. Sanctions open to the Disputes Committee in respect of any breach of these Regulations and/or RFU Regulations will include but are not limited to the following:
 - Reprimand an individual or Entrant
 - A deduction of points
 - A fine up to £100 and/or an award or reasonable costs as scheduled by either the Disputes Committee and/or a complainant
 - Order a replay
 - Order that the result is that an Entrant has lost the match
 - Exclusion/disqualification of an Entrant from the Competition, for a specific period of time as the Disputes Committee may decide.
- 10.3. Any fines collected will be put towards the costs of this Competition. Failure by an Entrant to pay a fine or costs will be considered a further breach of these Regulations and may result in the removal of the Entrant from future competitions.

11. Right of Appeal

- 11.1. Should an Entrant or affected party wish to appeal a decision of the Disputes Committee, that party shall have a right to appeal in accordance with this Regulation 11.
- 11.2. Such party may, within 72 hours from the receipt of the letter or notice informing it of the Disputes Committee's decision, lodge an appeal in writing to the Competition Organiser, who shall then notify the RFU Head of Discipline. Without prejudice to the party's appeal rights, the RFU Head of Discipline has the power to refer the matter back to the Disputes Committee for further consideration. If the matter cannot be resolved by the Disputes Committee, the appeal shall be referred to an Appeal Panel for determination.
- 11.3. Any appeal will be dealt with in accordance with the appeal provisions of RFU Regulation 19 and the decision of the appeal panel is final.

12. Broadcasting, Media and Image Rights

- 12.1. All broadcasting, media and image rights relating to the Competitions belong solely and exclusively to the RFU, and all participating entrants agree not, by any act or omission, to do anything to prejudice, or that is in conflict with, these rights.
- 12.2. In all Competition matches participating teams may record matches for the purpose of analysis and non-commercial purposes only unless a reasonable objection is received from a participating team.
- 12.3. Anyone wishing to broadcast any match by means of radio, television or any other audio-visual or electronic media shall be permitted to do so solely on a not-for-profit basis unless a reasonable objection is received from a participating team or unless directed otherwise by the RFU and/or the Competition Organiser. The ability for anyone to broadcast any match by any means shall at all times remain subject to the sole discretion of the RFU.
- 12.4. No team shall take any part (either as organiser or participant or in any other way) in any match that is in whole or in part broadcast by means of radio, television or any other audio-visual or electronic media, where doing so shall be a breach of any broadcasting, or other, contract entered into by the RFU or any other person acting for or on behalf of itself or any group or association of Clubs, Schools, Constituent Bodies or Unions.

13. Obligations

- 13.1. Each Entrant entering its team in this competition agrees:
 - a) that, by commencing its programme of matches in the Competition, it has entered into a legally binding obligation with the RFU, and, as a separate covenant, with every other team in the Competition and with any sponsor and/or commercial partner as may be associated with the competition in which the team plays;
 - b) to comply in every particular with these Regulations, the RFU Rules and Regulations, and the World Rugby Rules/Regulations;
 - c) to permit access to its premises during a match to any person authorised by the RFU, or Competition Organiser (with or without notice) to check compliance with all or any of the above Regulations.

ANNEX 1

RFU ACE LEAGUE MATCH DATES 2023/24

Month	W/C	Wednesday	ACE Playing Programme
			OPTION C
August	28	30	
September	4	6	
September	11	13	ACE R1 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s
September	18	20	ACE R2 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s
September	25	27	ACE R3 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s
October	2	4	ACE R4 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s
October	9	11	ACE R5 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s
October	16	18	ACE R6 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s
October	23	25	ACE R7 (Stage 1) & Dev 15s / Half Term
October	30	1	
November	6	8	ACE Rnd 8 (Stage 2)
November	13	15	ACE Rnd 9 (Stage 2)
November	20	22	ACE Rnd 10 (Stage 2)
November	27	29	
December	4	6	ACE Play Off Finals
December	11	13	
December	18	20	