

**PROFESSIONAL GAME BOARD (PGB)**  
**MINIMUM STANDARDS CRITERIA FOR ENTRY INTO THE**  
**PREMIERSHIP IN SEASON 2023/24**  
**(FOR AUDIT IN SEASON 2022/23)**

## **Section 1 – Introduction**

### **1. Background and Objectives**

- 1.1. The vision of the RFU is to achieve a successful and thriving game across England. The ability for rugby clubs to aspire to the highest level of competition possible has been a central tenet of the structure of rugby within England.
- 1.2. These Minimum Standards Criteria form part of a structure which allows for promotion to the Premiership based on more than simply on-field performance. As approved by the RFU Council, these standards are based on a Premiership with a size of up to 14, with a moratorium on relegation for sporting performance until the end of the 2023/24 season. This structure also includes an annual Spot Check Audit.
- 1.3. These minimum standards will take effect from season 2022/23, and apply to promotion to the Premiership from the end of that season.
- 1.4. The objectives of this structure, these Minimum Standards Criteria and the Spot Check Audit are:
  - 1.4.1. To ensure a sustainable Premiership and Championship, with clubs in the Premiership and Championship more able to be financially viable.
  - 1.4.2. To provide a level playing field for Premiership clubs.
  - 1.4.3. To incentivise clubs in the Premiership and those aspiring to be in the Premiership to invest in infrastructure.
  - 1.4.4. To enable the ambition of clubs currently outside the Premiership to aspire to join the Premiership.
- 1.5. In order to achieve these objectives, the Minimum Standards Criteria and Spot Check Audit are focused on achieving improved standards for the benefit of rugby as a whole in four main areas:
  - 1.5.1. Playing facilities – with a view to ensuring the best facilities in those areas which can affect performance and/or player safety and welfare.
  - 1.5.2. Customer experience – with a view to giving supporters a better experience and allowing Clubs to drive increased revenues.
  - 1.5.3. Media image and facilities – with a view to providing a better visual product for TV and media, thereby achieving increased revenues for distribution to the Clubs while balancing the obligations fairly on all Clubs to move from their preferred kick off time and/or day to achieve these revenues.
  - 1.5.4. Governance – to incentivise improved governance of clubs in the Premiership and those aspiring to be in the Premiership.

### **2. Outline process**

- 2.1. The Premiership will have a maximum number of 14 teams until the end of Season 2023/24. There will be a moratorium on relegation for sporting performance until the end of the 2023/24 season, albeit that relegation may still be possible for regulatory or insolvency reasons. This will be set out in more detail in the Premiership Regulations for each of those seasons.

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- 2.2. Subject to the maximum composition of 14, clubs wishing to be promoted from the Championship must meet each of the Minimum Standards Criteria, and clubs currently in the Premiership must meet the Minimum Standards Criteria in order to remain in the Premiership.
- 2.3. At the end of Season 2022/23, the winner of the Championship will be promoted if it meets these Minimum Standards Criteria. In that case, and if there remain 14 clubs in the Premiership at the end of Season 2023/24, if the winner of the Championship in Season 2023/24 meets the Minimum Standards Criteria, it will enter a play-off with the club finishing bottom of the Premiership in Season 2023/24. The winner of that play-off will play in the Premiership in Season 2024/25, and the loser will play in the Championship.
- 2.4. If the winner of the Championship does not meet these Minimum Standards Criteria, then the Premiership will remain at a maximum of 13 clubs in season 2023/24. In that case, or if for any reason there are or will be fewer than 14 clubs in the Premiership at the end of Season 2023/24, the RFU Council will then set the regulations for any promotion and relegation at the end of season 2023/24.
- 2.5. This paragraph 2 is designed to be an indicative plan of future competition structure. The assessment process is set out in section 2. In the event of any inconsistency between Section 1 and Section 2, Section 2 shall prevail. In the event of any inconsistency between Section 1 and any RFU Regulations (including the Premiership Regulations), then the RFU Regulations shall prevail.

### **3. General points**

- 3.1. Defined terms used in this document are set out in Section 4.
- 3.2. These Minimum Standards Criteria will be reviewed annually, and changes may be made if that is in the best interests of the game.

## **Section 2 – The Audit Process**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Section describes the audit process and timing for existing Premiership clubs and for Championship clubs.
- 1.2. All Premiership clubs, and those Championship clubs that request an audit in writing to the Audit Notification System by 1 December 2022 to determine their eligibility for promotion to the Premiership, will be subject to an annual audit by 31 January 2023.
- 1.3. For Premiership clubs, this annual audit will cover the Minimum Standards Criteria identified in this document through a non-match day and match day audit by 31 January 2023. Premiership clubs will also be subject to Spot Check Audits which will take place throughout the 2022/23 season for those criteria identified in the Spot Check Criteria and will be subject to potential sanctions as any breaches arise during the 2022/23 season.
- 1.4. For Championship clubs, the annual audit will cover all the Minimum Standards Criteria through a non-match day and match day audit by 31 January 2023, provided that the Championship Club has:
  - 1.4.1. notified the Audit Notification System of its Principal Home Ground where appropriate) by 1 December 2022 (which, for the avoidance of doubt, will be the Ground which will be audited); and
  - 1.4.2. confirmed to the Audit Notification System in writing that it wishes to be audited and considered for promotion by no later than 1 December 2022.

For the avoidance of doubt, if a Championship club has not requested an audit in accordance with this paragraph 1.4 (including having nominated its Principal Home Ground, by 1 December 2022) no audit will be carried out on that club and it will not be eligible for promotion to the Premiership.

- 1.5. The PGB may delegate its decisions under this process to the Task Group, provided that the Task Group may escalate any decision to the PGB, and the PGB may decide to take any action required of the Task Group under this process itself.

### **2. Existing Premiership clubs**

- 2.1. The audit process is as follows:
  - 2.1.1. The Minimum Standards Criteria will be circulated to all Premiership clubs, c/o the Club Chief Executive. It is the Chief Executive's responsibility to advise all relevant Club personnel of the existence of these Minimum Standards Criteria.
  - 2.1.2. All Premiership clubs are required to notify the Audit Notification System by 1 December 2022, of the Principal Home Ground and/or Temporary Ground at which they intend to play home games in the 2023/24 season. Please note that, for the avoidance of doubt, the Principal Home Ground of Premiership clubs cannot be changed without the express approval of the PGB (and the RFU pursuant to RFU Regulation 3.8).
  - 2.1.3. The Principal Home Ground or Temporary Ground as notified to the Audit Notification System will be subject to audit.

- 2.1.4. The PGB decision process that follows the audits is outlined in paragraph 4 below.

***Temporary and Third Party Grounds***

- 2.1.5. If a Premiership club wishes to relocate to a Temporary Ground prior to returning to its Principal Home Ground or moving to its future Principal Home Ground, the relocation may be permitted notwithstanding the Premiership club not having Primacy of Tenure at the Temporary Ground provided it is for the sole purpose of substantial ground developments at its current or future Principal Home Ground and the following requirements are satisfied:
- (a) such a move is given the prior approval of the PGB (and the RFU pursuant to RFU Regulation 3.8). The Premiership club must (in addition to the below Criteria) provide evidence to the satisfaction of the PGB of the planning permissions, construction contracts, and financing arrangements for the developments and the arrangements for match scheduling at the Temporary Ground agreed with the owner of the Temporary Ground. For the avoidance of doubt, Premiership clubs will not be permitted to move to a Temporary Ground at any point during the playing season without the prior approval of the PGB; and
  - (b) the Temporary Ground meets the Minimum Standards Criteria, with the exception of Primacy of Tenure; and
  - (c) such a permission shall enable a move to the Temporary Ground for the Permitted Period; and
  - (d) the Premiership club must return to the Principal Home Ground or to its future Principal Home Ground by no later than the end of the Permitted Period.

In such circumstances, the Primacy of Tenure criteria will, during the Permitted Period, be assessed against the Premiership club's Principal Home Ground or future Principal Home Ground (supported by appropriate documentary evidence) notwithstanding any ground developments in progress.

- 2.1.6. If a Premiership club wishes to relocate to a Temporary Ground prior to returning to its Principal Home Ground (whether existing or new) for any reason other than substantial ground developments, then the relocation may be permitted notwithstanding the Premiership club not having Primacy of Tenure at the Temporary Ground provided:
- (a) such a move is given the prior approval of the PGB (and the RFU pursuant to RFU Regulation 3.8). The Premiership club must (in addition to the below Criteria) provide evidence to the satisfaction of PGB of the playing schedule at the Temporary Ground agreed with the owner of the Temporary Ground; and
  - (b) the Temporary Ground meets the Minimum Standards Criteria, with the exception of Primacy of Tenure; and
  - (c) for the avoidance of doubt where a Premiership club wishes to move to a Temporary Ground for the purposes of playing an individual match (or matches) prior to returning to play at its Principal Home Ground, it must still comply with paragraph 2.1.7.

- 2.1.7. If a Premiership club wishes to use a Third Party Ground (including for the avoidance of doubt Twickenham Stadium or Wembley Stadium for a one-off match), that club will need to apply to the PGB for permission to do so. The PGB may arrange for that Third Party Ground to be audited and will only permit that Third Party Ground to be used for that one-off match if it is satisfied that it meets the Minimum Standards Criteria relating to stadia. Because these matches are one-offs, and temporary measures may be put in place, the Task Group may agree to waive any of the Minimum Standards Criteria in respect of a Third Party Ground.

### **3. Championship Clubs**

#### **3.1. The audit process is as follows:**

- 3.1.1. The Minimum Standards Criteria will be circulated to all Championship clubs, c/o Club Chief Executive. It is the Club Chief Executive's responsibility to advise all relevant Club personnel of the existence of these Minimum Standards Criteria.
- 3.1.2. All Championship clubs must notify the Audit Notification System by 1 December 2022, of the Principal Home Ground (and Temporary Ground where appropriate) at which they intend to play home games in the 2023/24 season. Please note the Minimum Standards Criteria in relation to changing Principal Home Grounds and relocating to Temporary Grounds (with which a Championship club promoted to the Premiership for the 2023/24 season must comply) are as set out in paragraph 2 above.
- 3.1.3. RFU Regulation 3.8 shall apply to a Championship club which wishes to nominate a Principal Home Ground which is not its usual home ground, provided that a nomination of a Principal Home Ground as part of this Minimum Standards Criteria process shall be deemed to be an application under Regulation 3.8. A Championship club may not change its nominated Principal Home Ground after 1 December 2022.
- 3.1.4. The Principal Home Ground or Temporary Ground as notified to the RFU will be subject to audit.
- 3.1.5. Championship clubs are advised to ensure that all new stand or ground developments take account of the Minimum Standards Criteria set out in this documentation, and the details of such developments should be submitted to the RFU.
- 3.1.6. Preliminary Minimum Standards Criteria questionnaires may be sent out to all Championship clubs ahead of the Audit by or on behalf of the RFU and the PGB. These should be returned and be completed based on the management and facilities in place as at that date. The purpose of this is to identify shortfalls in meeting the Minimum Standards Criteria and to advise Championship clubs on such issues.
- 3.1.7. The Independent Auditor will submit an interim report to the Task Group on the outcome of this exercise. The interim report will include a summary of Championship club submissions and correspondence.

#### **3.2. Business plan consultation**

- 3.2.1. A club in the Championship wishing to be promoted to the Premiership may provide a business plan to the RFU and Premiership Rugby for feedback in order to assist the club in preparing for promotion to the Premiership.
- 3.2.2. Championship clubs should note that the content of the business plan does not determine promotion; this is instead designed to allow for constructive and helpful check and challenge to help the club formulate a sustainable plan.

#### **4. Decision-making process**

- 4.1. Following delivery of the Independent Auditor's report, the decision process for existing Premiership clubs will be as follows:
  - 4.1.1. The Task Group will review relevant reports and make recommendations to the PGB. The PGB will determine whether Premiership clubs have achieved the Minimum Standards Criteria and will inform any existing Premiership club if they have failed to meet any of the Minimum Standards Criteria, and recommend what action the PGB and/or RFU should take. The PGB may also make a recommendation to the RFU Board. The Task Group and/or the PGB and/or the RFU Board may ask for representations from a Club prior to making any decision.
  - 4.1.2. Minimum Standards Criteria are mandatory criteria for which non-compliance by a Club by the deadline set out in this document or such other time agreed by the PGB, will result in a sanction by the PGB with options including, but not limited to:
    - a requirement to remedy the relevant Minimum Standards Criterion failure within a specified timeframe;
    - a points deduction for the 2023/24 season; or
    - in exceptional circumstances (for example, a club not being able to play at its Principal Home Ground) a requirement that the club does not compete in the Premiership in season 2023/24.
  - 4.1.3. In the event that the PGB requires a Club to remedy a Minimum Standards Criterion failure with a specified timeframe and the Club fails to do so, the PGB will impose a points deduction for the 2023/24 season or in exceptional circumstances (for example, a club not being able to play at its Principal Home Ground) may require that the club does not compete in the Premiership in season 2023/24.
  - 4.1.4. There will be a maximum of five Clubs at any one time allowed to play in the Premiership for season 2023/24 which do not meet the Minimum Standards Criteria relating to Primacy of Tenure. No sanction for lack of primacy of tenure will be levied by the PGB in relation to any one of such Clubs.
  - 4.1.5. The Premiership Clubs in the 2022/23 season lacking Primacy of Tenure are: Wasps, London Irish and Bristol. In the event any such Club gains Primacy of Tenure prior to the start of the 2023/24 season, this will free up one of the five places referred to in paragraph 4.2(ii) above and its name should be deemed removed from this paragraph.

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- 4.2. Following consideration of the Independent Auditor's report by the Task Group and the PGB, the RFU decision process for the Championship clubs wishing to be promoted will be as follows:
- 4.2.1. Subject to paragraphs 4.2.2 and 4.2.3, for the Club that wins the Championship, if the RFU Board is satisfied that the Minimum Standards Criteria have been met or addressed to the satisfaction of the RFU, then that Club will be entitled to promotion to the Premiership for the 2023/24 season.
  - 4.2.2. If the Minimum Standards Criteria relating to Primacy of Tenure have not been met by the Club that wins the Championship but the RFU is satisfied that the other Minimum Standards Criteria have been met or addressed to the satisfaction of the RFU Board by the Championship club, then that Club will be entitled to promotion to the Premiership for the 2023/24 provided that there are four or fewer other Clubs who will be playing in the Premiership in the 2023/24 season which do not meet the Minimum Standards Criteria relating to Primacy of Tenure.
  - 4.2.3. For the avoidance of doubt, if there are already five Clubs in the Premiership for 2023/24 season who do not meet the Minimum Standards Criteria relating to Primacy of Tenure, a Club which wins the Championship in the 2022/23 must meet the Minimum Standards Criteria, including those relating to Primacy of Tenure, in order to be eligible to be promoted.
  - 4.2.4. If the RFU Board is not satisfied that the Minimum Standards Criteria have been met by a Championship Club, then such Club will not be eligible to be promoted to the Premiership for the 2023/24 season.

***Staged approach to achieving a capacity of 10,001***

- 4.3. A Championship Club seeking promotion may elect to take a staged approach to achieving a Total Licensed Capacity of at least 10,001 in its Principal Home Ground as set out in Criteria OF6.
- 4.4. In the event that such Club does not:
- 4.4.1. provide a binding agreement with a contractor by such date specified by the PGB to undertake the works necessary to achieve a Total Licensed Capacity of 10,001 within 14 days of the final match of the Championship in season 2022/23 or by such other date specified as set out in paragraph 4.4.1; or
  - 4.4.2. achieve either a Total Licensed Capacity of 10,001 at its Principal Home Ground by 30 June 2024 or by such date ahead of Season 2024/25 as the PGB shall specify,

then that Club shall not be permitted to play in the Premiership in Season 2024/25.

**5. Force Majeure**

- 5.1. The PGB (or the RFU in the specific case of promotion for Championship clubs or a promoted Club remaining in the Premiership as set out in paragraph 4.4) may, acting in its absolute discretion, waive the need for a Club to comply with the Minimum Standards Criteria contained herein if it is satisfied that the failure to meet any of the Minimum Standards Criteria is:



- 5.1.1. temporary and is caused by an event beyond the reasonable control of the Club; and
  - 5.1.2. if the Club could not have prevented it by taking steps which it could reasonably be expected to have taken; and
  - 5.1.3. the Club could not have reasonably been expected to take the risk of it into account by insurance or otherwise; and
  - 5.1.4. if the events apply to existing premises, plant, equipment or materials to the extent that such premises, plant, equipment or materials are already in use and had received the necessary planning, highways, license and other necessary approvals and certificates and had qualified as part of the Club's entry criteria; and
  - 5.1.5. the Club notifies the RFU Legal and Governance Director of the relevant event and consequence as soon as reasonably possible after it occurs; and
  - 5.1.6. provides the PGB or the RFU (as the case may be) with any further information requested about the event (or its causes) or the consequence as soon as reasonably possible; and
  - 5.1.7. takes any steps (except steps involving significant additional costs) which the PGB or the RFU (as the case may be) reasonably requires in order to rectify the situation; and
  - 5.1.8. it is for the Club to demonstrate to the PGB or the RFU (as the case may be) that a matter is a consequence of an event covered by this paragraph 5.1 that the event and the consequence were neither preventable nor foreseeable and that it has satisfied the conditions as set out in this paragraph 5.1.
- 5.2. For the avoidance of doubt, force majeure does not include failure to apply for planning permission or any intention to comply with any of the Minimum Standards Criteria.

## **6. The Arbitration Process**

- 6.1. Any disputes arising out of or in relation to:
  - 6.1.1. Any decision taken by the RFU under these Minimum Standards Criteria relating to whether a Championship club is or is not eligible to be promoted; and/or
  - 6.1.2. Any decision taken by the PGB (or the Task Group) relating to whether any breach of these Minimum Standards Criteria has been committed by a Club participating in the Premiership and any sanction to be imposed on that Club,

shall be referred by the Premiership or Championship club concerned or any other Premiership or Championship club directly affected by such decision (meaning that its ability to compete in the Premiership in the following season will or may be determined by the relevant decision) to an independent panel for final and binding arbitration in accordance with RFU Regulation 19 in so far as that Regulation does not conflict with these Minimum Standards Criteria, which Regulations as amended, are deemed to be incorporated by reference into this paragraph.

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- 6.2. A club may only make an appeal on the grounds that the RFU Board (or PGB or Task Group if applicable):
  - 6.2.1. came to a decision to which no reasonable body could have come; or
  - 6.2.2. made an error of law in reaching its decision; or
  - 6.2.3. the decision was reached as a result of procedural errors so great that the rights of the applicant have been clearly and substantially prejudiced; or
  - 6.2.4. the sanction imposed was so excessive as to be unreasonable.
- 6.3. Any Championship or Premiership Club potentially directly affected (meaning that its ability to compete in the Premiership in the following season will or may be determined by the relevant decision) by any such arbitration shall have a right to be heard in such arbitration and shall thereby submit to the arbitration process and shall not bring any proceedings in the courts in place of that arbitration process.
- 6.4. If a Club wishes to refer a dispute regarding a PGB or RFU decision to arbitration then they must submit a written notice to arbitrate to the RFU Disciplinary Hearings Manager no later than 4pm on the fourteenth date following the letter notifying them of the sanction or decision setting out:
  - 6.4.1. the decision(s) which the Club wishes to arbitrate;
  - 6.4.2. full details of the dispute to be subject to arbitration; and
  - 6.4.3. in the case of a Championship Club only, whether it wishes to apply to stay proceedings as permitted in paragraph 6.6.
- 6.5. Late notices of arbitration will not be effective. The RFU Disciplinary Hearings Manager will appoint the panel and the Club serving the notice of arbitration will have a reasonable opportunity to make submissions in the event it has any objection to the panel proposed.
- 6.6. If a Championship Club has served a written notice under paragraph 6.4 in relation whether that club is eligible for promotion to the Premiership, but does not know whether it has yet won the Championship, it may apply for a stay in that arbitration process pending that confirmation. The panel appointed under paragraph 6.5 shall decide whether a stay is to be granted. The RFU and Premiership Rugby shall be entitled to be heard in any hearing or decision as to whether a stay is granted.
- 6.7. The Club bringing the appeal may be required at the sole discretion of the panel to pay the costs of the arbitration or a fixed contribution towards those costs. The panel will not have jurisdiction to award any legal costs to any party to or intervener in such arbitration.

## **7. Summary of Key Dates**

- 7.1. A summary of the key Minimum Standards Criteria dates that all Clubs should be aware of, and comply with, in relation to the Audit Process is set out below.
- 7.2. The dates for submission of this documentation and the audit process have been determined in order to allow Clubs sufficient time to comply with these Minimum Standards Criteria, with the need to give certainty for all Clubs, players and other

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stakeholders as to the number of teams in the Premiership and Championship, and promotion and relegation across other leagues.

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Key date</b>
The Minimum Standards Criteria to be audited in the forthcoming season are distributed to the Chief Executive (or Chair, as appropriate) at all Premiership and Championship clubs. It is the Chief Executive's responsibility to advise all relevant Club personnel of the existence of these Minimum Standards Criteria.	September 2022
Championship clubs wishing to be audited and considered for promotion to notify the RFU's Legal and Governance Director via the Audit Notification System.	1 December 2022
All Premiership clubs, and Championship clubs that request an audit the Principal Home Ground (or Temporary Ground where appropriate) at which they intend to play home games in the 2023/24 season.	1 December 2022
All Premiership clubs, and Championship clubs that request an audit, to be audited.	Before 31 January 2023
Each Club must have signed a legally binding agreement to occupy the Principal Home Ground (or future Principal Home Ground where appropriate) from an effective date 1 September 2023 until at least the end of the 2023/24 Season.	31 January 2023

## **Section 3 – Minimum Standards Criteria**

To be audited on a match day and non-match day by 31 January 2023 (or such date as may be agreed by the Task Group) for both Premiership and Championship clubs.

### **1. Administration, Management and Finance**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Principle</b>	<b>Criteria requirement</b>
<b>Finance</b>		
AMF1	<b>Evidence of financial stability</b>	<p>The Club is envisaged to continue to be able to trade for the 2023/24 season, evidenced by:</p> <p>(1) The Club’s annual report and accounts for the season 2021/22 to contain a statement from the Club’s auditors confirming that the Club is a going concern (which may include a clarification that this is dependent on support from a benefactor, or any material uncertainty qualification). For the purposes of this section, “the Club” means any group accounts including the activity of the club, or the entity which holds the assets of the Club.</p> <p>(2) Either:</p> <p>(a) The Club’s auditors providing a statement to the directors of the Club confirming that (a) the Club is a going concern, (b) the Club will be able to trade for Season 2023/24. Note that this statement may include the clarification that this is dependent on support from a benefactor; or</p> <p>(b) The Club’s auditors providing the following statement to the RFU: “<i>We have carried out a limited review of financial forecasts prepared by management which cover the 2023/24 season and, from this limited review, nothing has come to our attention that would lead us to conclude that the club will not be able to trade for the duration of the 2023/24 season</i>”; or</p> <p>(c) The Club providing a full minute of the relevant section of the Club’s board meeting in which the annual report and accounts were approved, showing the discussion of the Club’s board which confirms that it had taken all relevant factors into account when approving the annual report and accounts</p> <p>If the Club’s annual report and accounts have not been signed by the Club’s directors and approved by its auditors as at 31 January 2023, then this must be provided immediately following signature by the Club’s directors.</p>
<b>Non-financial governance</b>		
AMF2	<b>Basic governance</b>	<p>The Club’s ownership must be clear.</p> <p>A group structure chart must be provided, and confirmation of ultimate beneficial owner(s) provided.</p>

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AMF3		<p>A Club must have the following personnel in place (or if not in place at the time of the audit, a clear recruitment plan):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO/MD (or equivalent);</li> <li>• CFO/FD (or equivalent);</li> <li>• Groundsperson;</li> <li>• Director of Rugby/Head of Rugby (or equivalent);</li> <li>• Head of Commercial (or equivalent);</li> <li>• Head of Communications (or equivalent);</li> <li>• Clinical Governance Lead (as set out in the Spot Check Criteria);</li> <li>• Lead Doctor (as set out in the Spot Check Criteria);</li> <li>• Lead Academy Doctor (as set out in the Spot Check Criteria); and</li> </ul> <p>Safeguarding Lead (as set out in the Spot Check Criteria).</p>

## 2. Off-field

Number	Principle	Criteria requirement
OF1	<b>Safety and security</b>	<p>Each Club must demonstrate that it has a current local authority Safety Certificate as required by the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and each Club's CEO must provide written confirmation that the Club complies at all times with the terms of the local authority Safety Certificate.</p> <p>In the case of a Championship Club seeking promotion to the Premiership for season 2023/24 and if that Club's Principal Home Ground is not a Designated Ground under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, then it is acknowledged that this safety certificate will not be issued under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act and therefore that Club must in addition provide written confirmation from the relevant Local Authority that the Local Authority will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) inspect the Principal Home Ground to at least the standard required as if it were a Designated Ground;</li> <li>(b) use all available powers to enforce the provisions of such Safety Certificate to the extent appropriate; and</li> <li>(c) submit to an appropriate independent assurance process of such inspection regime if required by the RFU.</li> </ul> <p>Note that if that Championship Club seeks to use the alternative, staged approach to achieve a Total Licensed Capacity of 10,001 set out in OF6, it must have a local authority Safety Certificate as required by the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 in force prior to Season 2024/25.</p>
OF2		<p>Clubs must demonstrate that they have a Health and Safety Policy and risk assessment concerning the organisation and arrangements for health and safety at work.</p>
OF3	<b>Security of tenure</b>	<p>Each Club must have signed, by no later than 31 January 2023, a legally binding agreement to occupy the Principal Home Ground (or future Principal Home Ground where appropriate) from an effective date no later than 1 September 2023 until at least the end of the 2023/24 season.</p>
OF4		<p>A Club must demonstrate* that it can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. schedule its home matches (other than those at (iii) and (iv) below) on any Friday, Saturday, Sunday and any bank or public holiday during the season, in all such cases with a kick-off time between 12 noon and 8.00pm and on any other day during the season with a kick off time between 6pm and 8pm; and</li> <li>ii. meet the requirements of Premiership Rugby's broadcast partner (namely, to be able to allow the broadcast of its home games in each season) on receipt of the requisite notice from the broadcast partner, being 6 weeks' notice for matches no</li> </ul>

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		<p>later than 3 months before the end of season or 4 weeks' notice for matches within 3 months of the end of the season; and</p> <p>iii. play its home match (if applicable) in Round 26 at any kick-off time on the afternoons of both Saturday and Sunday of the last weekend of each season in order to ensure simultaneous kick off times for all Round 26 matches; and</p> <p>iv. play its home matches in the end of season play offs, being any Premiership Semi-Final on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and at kick-off times between 12pm and 8pm.</p> <p><i>*up to a maximum of 5 Clubs may be granted a dispensation by the PGB from complying with these criteria.</i></p>
OF5		A Club must notify the Audit Notification System of its Principal Home Ground by 1 December 2022.
OF6	<b>Capacity</b>	<p>Each Club's Principal Home Ground or Temporary Ground must provide a minimum Total Licensed Capacity of at least 10,001. This must be comprised of seated and terraced standing areas.</p> <p><i>Note: for ground developments to increase capacity, where the ground has previously provided a minimum Total Licensed Capacity of at least 10,001, the PGB may grant approval to temporarily reduce the capacity levels for a period of not more than one calendar year. For approval to be granted, evidence of detailed planning permission and of a signed construction contract with start and end dates must be provided and approved by the PGB.</i></p> <p>For Championship Clubs seeking promotion to the Premiership for season 2023/24, the following shall apply as an alternative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For Season 2023/24, the Club's Principal Home Ground or Temporary Ground must provide a minimum Total Licensed Capacity of at least 5,000.</li> <li>2. For Season 2024/25, the Club's Principal Home Ground or Temporary Ground must provide a minimum Total Licensed Capacity of at least 10,001.<sup>1</sup></li> </ol>
OF7		The minimum Total Licensed Capacity must include a minimum of 4,200 seats. This shall not apply a Championship Club seeking promotion to the Premiership for Season 2023/24 where such Club seeks to use the alternative, staged approach to a Total Licensed Capacity of 10,001 set out in OF6.
OF8		The minimum Total Licensed Capacity must include a minimum number of covered spaces of 3,400 (seats or standing). This shall not apply a Championship Club seeking promotion to the Premiership for Season 2023/24 where such Club seeks to use the alternative,

<sup>1</sup> Guidance note for readers: PGB has agreed that compliance with point 2 is to be based on planning permission in place at time of audit in January 2023, if ground does not already have that capacity

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		staged approach to a Total Licensed Capacity of 10,001 set out in OF6.
OF9	<b>Pitch and playing area</b>	Slopes in any direction shall not exceed 1:80 along the line of play and 1:40 across the line of play.
OF10		Each Club must carry out a risk assessment regarding the minimum distances between the Pitch Perimeter Barrier and the playing area to address safety issues, including reference to any objects which lie within 5m of the playing area.  <i>Note: Clubs will be required to produce evidence that the risk assessment has been undertaken and mitigating measures applied.</i>
OF11	<b>Changing rooms</b>	Each Club must provide two secure team changing rooms (home and away).
OF12		The away team changing room must provide a minimum changing space of 30m <sup>2</sup> .
OF13		Each changing room must be served by at least two urinals or WC's, two wash hand basins and a minimum of six shower fittings.  Where this provision is not located within the changing room, toilets must be within the immediate vicinity of the changing room. For the avoidance of doubt, baths are not considered a substitute for shower provision.
OF14		Match Officials must have a separate and secure changing room of a minimum of 6 sqm to accommodate a minimum of five match officials.
OF15		The Match Officials room must be served by at least one WC and one urinal or WC, one wash hand basin and a minimum of two shower fittings.  Where this provision is not located within the changing room, toilets and showers must be located within the immediate vicinity of the officials' room.
OF16		For all newly constructed grounds and Stands incorporating Match Officials provision completed after 31 March 2006, there must be a separate, secure changing room to provide for five officials with a minimum of 2.5 sqm per official i.e. total area of 12.5 sqm.
OF17	<b>Media and broadcast</b>	Each Club must provide a dedicated press area that is undercover, reserved exclusively for use by written and radio media representatives to accommodate a minimum of 30 representatives.
OF18		The press area must be located between the 22 metre lines.
OF19		In addition to standard provision to accommodate a minimum of 30 written and radio media representatives within the press area, Clubs



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		<p>must demonstrate they can accommodate, on a temporary basis, an additional 20 written and radio media representatives within the ground for larger games, for example Premiership Rugby Semi-Final matches. This provision must be between the 22m lines.</p>
OF20		<p>A separate media room must be provided for use by 30 members of the media before and after the match. This is where post-match press conferences will be staged.</p>
OF21		<p>In addition to standard provision to accommodate a minimum of 30 media representatives in the media room, Clubs must demonstrate that they can accommodate an additional 20 media representatives in a media room i.e. 50 in total before and after the match for larger games, for example Premiership Rugby Semi-Final matches.</p>
OF22		<p>For all matchday and rigging days, provision must be made for broadcast vehicles in the form of a compound. The compound must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be a minimum of 25sqm, with enough space for an articulated lorry to manoeuvre within;</li> <li>• be made up of a hard-standing surface (e.g. tarmac), have sufficient drainage and provision for de-icing;</li> <li>• have lighting provision for night events; and</li> <li>• have access to toilets, within a short distance, and waste disposal facilities.</li> </ul> <p>At Clubs where the broadcast compound is near high footfall areas, provision must be made to lay cable either via ducting or overhead.</p>
OF23		<p>Each Club's Principal Home Ground or Temporary Ground must contain provision for television camera placement throughout including:</p> <p>a) a television gantry which must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be located on the side of the pitch that does not face into the sun;</li> <li>• cross the centre line of the pitch at some point;</li> <li>• provide an unrestricted view of the whole of the playing area and the opposite Stand (it must not be too low or too high); and</li> <li>• support a minimum of 8 people and 3 cameras,</li> </ul> <p>b) playing area corner camera positions which must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be located in each of the four corners of the field; and</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide an unrestricted view down the relevant touchline and in goal area, and</li> </ul> <p>c) low level side of pitch camera position which must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be located on the halfway line, on the same side of the field as the television gantry;</li> <li>provide an elevated unrestricted view of the playing area; and</li> </ul> <p>be below the television gantry.</p>
OF24	<b>Accessibility</b>	<p>All Premiership clubs designing new stands and grounds due to be completed after 1 June 2018 must adhere to the Accessible Stadia Guide and ensure an access consultant is part of the design team.</p> <p><i>Compliance will be based on a signed declaration by the Chief Executive showing compliance with this criterion.</i></p>
OF25	<b>Car Parking</b>	Each Club must provide or procure car parking provision for VIPs, sponsors, media, match officials and the disabled.
OF26		Each Club must provide or procure team coach parking provision or provide an adequate drop off/collection point.
OF27	<b>Medical services and facilities for players</b>	<p>Each Club must provide a medical treatment room for players at its Principal Home Ground and any other ground hosting 'A' League or Academy games or training sessions.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, all other games and training sessions including, but not limited to, Elite Player Development Group and Developing Player Programme training sessions, are excluded from this requirement.</p> <p>The minimum physical requirements for a medical treatment room are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>access available to both teams;</li> <li>access for a stretcher from the pitch and to an external exit accessible by ambulance, with a minimum corridor width of 1.2m;</li> <li>a minimum door width of 1.2m, wide enough to allow passage of a stretcher and bearers;</li> <li>floors to be non-slip, impervious and washable;</li> <li>wall linings and worktops to be easily cleaned, to comply with hygiene and infection control requirements;</li> <li>a sink with hot and cold running water;</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct or nearby access to a WC;</li> <li>• adequate lighting and heating;</li> <li>• access to a telephone line. This should be a land line allowing internal and external communication. The external line must be a direct line i.e. not routed via a switchboard; and</li> <li>• broadband connection with a dedicated and protected bandwidth for medical note keeping. This is to be satisfied by a declaration from the Clinical Governance Lead and Chief Executive.</li> </ul> <p>Clubs should note that the Principal Home Ground will be subject to audit – in relation to and any other ground hosting ‘A’ League or Academy games or training sessions, this will be evidenced by a written confirmation from the Clinical Governance Lead and Chief Executive.</p>
OF28		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For all grounds and Stands incorporating medical treatment provision for players installed at the Principal Home Ground the medical treatment room must be a minimum of 25 sqm and be available to both teams. If Clubs choose to provide a home club and away club medical room then each room must be a minimum of 15 sqm and both rooms must be fully equipped and fitted out as indicated in this criteria document.</li> </ul>
OF29		<p>Each Club must also make provision for dedicated doping control provision on match days at its Principal Home Ground. This provision must be separate to the medical room and comprise access to a private room with a desk, chairs, hand basin and WC. The WC can be adjacent but must have direct access to the doping control room.</p>
OF30		<p>For all grounds and Stands incorporating doping control provision installed after 31 March 2006 at the Principal Home Ground, dedicated match day doping control provision (not necessarily dedicated on non-match days) must be provided, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• waiting area suitably equipped with chairs and storage provision;</li> <li>• administration area, including wash basin; and</li> <li>• sample collection area, containing at least one WC.</li> </ul>

## **Section 4 – Definitions**

2.1 The definitions referred to in this document are defined below:

***‘Audit’***

The annual audit which, for Premiership clubs, comprises a match day and non-match day audit of the Minimum Standards Criteria identified in this document on or around 30 January 2023. For Championship clubs, the annual audit comprises a match day and non match day audit of the Minimum Standards Criteria identified this document on or around 30 January 2023.

***‘Audit Notification System’***

The notification email address or such other method such as a portal as notified by the RFU and Premier Rugby to be utilised by all Clubs to submit information and evidence relating to the audit as detailed in the Minimum Standards Criteria.

***‘Championship’***

The rugby football union league immediately below the Premiership.

***‘Championship club’***

Those clubs competing in the rugby football union Championship.

***‘Club’***

All rugby football Clubs who seek to play in the Premiership for the 2023/24 season.

***‘EPCR’***

European Professional Club Rugby; the tournament organiser for the European Rugby Champions Cup and the European Rugby Challenge Cup competitions.

***‘EPCR’ Participation Agreement’***

The participation agreement signed, or to be signed, by all Clubs wishing to take part in the European Rugby Champions Cup or the European Rugby Challenge Cup competitions.

***‘Independent Auditor’***

The independent body appointed by PGB to report on the status of each Club in relation to the Minimum Standards Criteria.

***‘Minimum Standards Criteria’***

The standards and requirements which Clubs must attain and which are described in this document.

***‘Permitted Period’***

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The period of a maximum of two full seasons or such other time as may be agreed by the PGB.

***'Premier Rugby Limited', also known as 'Premiership Rugby'***

The representative body of the Clubs competing in the Premiership from time to time, whose registered office is 84 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1PX (Company Registration Number 3096937).

***'Premiership'***

Level One of the English Clubs Championship, comprising the Premiership Clubs.

***'Premiership clubs'***

The Clubs who are, at the relevant time, playing in the Premiership.

***'Primacy of Tenure'***

Primacy of Tenure shall be deemed to be satisfied where a Club demonstrates that it can: -

- i) schedule its home matches in the 2023/24 season (other than those at (iii) and (iv) below) on any Friday, Saturday, Sunday and any bank or public holiday during the season, in all such cases with a kick-off time between 12 noon and 8.00pm and on any other day during the season with a kick off time between 6pm and 8pm; and
- ii) meet the requirements of Premiership Rugby's broadcast partner (namely, to be able to allow the broadcast of its home games in the 2023/24 season) on receipt of the requisite notice from the broadcast partner, being 6 weeks' notice for matches no later than 3 months before the end of season or 4 weeks' notice for matches within 3 months of the end of the season; and
- iii) play its home match (if applicable) in the final round of the 2023/24 Premiership season at any kick-off time on the afternoons of both Saturday and Sunday of the last weekend of the season in order to ensure simultaneous kick off times for all final round matches; and
- iv) play its home matches in the end of season play offs, being any Premiership Semi-Final on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in June 2024 and at kick-off times between 12pm and 8pm.

***'Principal Home Ground'***

The ground at which the Club will play all 1st XV home games in the 2023/24 season, save as envisaged by these standards in the case of the Temporary Ground.

***'Professional Game Agreement'***

The Agreement made between the RFU, Premiership Rugby and the Premiership Clubs for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2024 together with any amendment made from time to time.

***'The Professional Game Board' also known as "PGB"***

The Board appointed pursuant to the Professional Game Agreement.

***‘Rugby Football Union’***

The National Governing Body responsible for Rugby Union in England and whose registered office is at Rugby House, Twickenham Stadium, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 7BA.

***‘Salary Cap’***

The regulations set by Premiership Rugby, from time to time, covering the recording of financial and contractual payments to players and other third parties with a view to controlling the industry costs.

***‘Spot Check Audit’***

The annual audit which for Premiership clubs comprises a non match day audit of the Minimum Standards Criteria identified in the Spot Check Criteria at any time.

***‘Spot Check Criteria’***

The medical, safeguarding and facilities criteria set out in the document entitled ‘PGB Minimum Standards Criteria: Spot Check Criteria’ as updated from time to time.

***‘Stand’***

A structure providing viewing accommodation for spectators.

***‘Task Group’***

The group identified as the “minimum standards criteria group” in the Professional Game Agreement to manage the Minimum Standards Criteria and Spot Check Criteria processes.

***‘Temporary Ground’***

A ground to which a Club wishes to relocate as a temporary measure in 2023/24 for any reason other than to satisfy Primacy of Tenure requirements and which has been approved by the PGB.

***‘Third Party Ground’***

A ground which is neither a Principal Home Ground, a Standby Ground or a Temporary Ground but which is owned by a third party and which a Premiership Club is permitted by the PGB to play Premiership matches on a one-off basis.

***‘Total Licensed Capacity’***

The spectator areas of the ground for which a Safety Certificate is obtained from the local authority or which are subject to local authority approval, including any approvals for temporary spectator accommodation.

## **Section 4 – CEO’s Declaration**

As part of the audit of these Minimum Standards Criteria each Club’s CEO (or equivalent role holder or Chairperson, as applicable) will be required to sign a declaration, sent to the Audit Notification System, confirming the following matters:

### **A) Safety Certificate**

That the Club complies at all times and will continue to comply throughout the 2023/24 season with the terms of their local authority safety certificate.

### **B) Playing Commitments**

That their Club will continue to participate, or on joining the Premiership shall agree to participate (as applicable), in the following competitions (or any equivalent successor) in Season2023/24:

- Gallagher Premiership
- European Rugby Champions Cup
- European Rugby Challenge Cup
- Such other competitions as required by Premiership Rugby

### **C) Contractual Commitments**

That their club will with (or in respect of Clubs wishing to join the Premiership will do so upon promotion to the Premiership) following:<sup>2</sup>

- Premiership Rugby Shareholders’ Agreement
- Premiership Rugby Salary Cap regulations
- Premiership Rugby Commercial Regulations and Commercial Handbook
- Player Insurance Cover as determined by the PGB
- RFU Regulations and Rules
- World Rugby Regulations and Rules
- all approved Competition Regulations
- all Premiership Rugby sponsorship agreements
- all Premiership Rugby television and media agreements
- the Premiership Rugby Code of Conduct
- the Club’s RFU Academy Licence agreement (if applicable)
- any EPCR Participation Agreement(s)
- the Professional Game Agreement.

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<sup>2</sup> Copies of these documents will be available from Premiership Rugby, on request.

**D) New Stadia**

That in respect of a Premiership club designing new stands and grounds due to be completed after 1 June 2018, the new stands and grounds adhere to the Accessible Stadia Guide and an access consultant was part of the design team.

**E) Representations**

The information provided to the Independent Auditor and the confirmations in this declaration are to their knowledge accurate, complete and up to date.

They are authorised by the Club to provide the information and make any representations in respect of the Minimum Standards Criteria on behalf of the Club (such authority to be evidenced by a minute from the board of directors of the Club (certified to be true by the Club's company secretary) that clearly confirms the same).

They know of no other information relevant to the process that has not been provided.