

PYRAMID LEAGUE CRITERIA

TIER 3, TIER 4 AND TIER 5

Scottish Women's Football

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SCOTTISH WOMEN'S
FOOTBALL

Scottish Women's Football | Entry Criteria

Background

Scottish Women's Football has long established the principle of entry criteria for its leagues. This began with the SWPL back in 2019 and was underpinned by ensuring that standards are set and clubs know how to prepare.

As the game has grown, so too has the need to evolve and adapt entry criteria across all our leagues which form tiers three, four and five of the pyramid for the women's game. SWF have worked hard to ensure that clubs know that when they start a new women's team that their entry point is the regional Scottish Women's Football League (SWFL) and to establish promotion from those leagues into our national competitions. That is a recent development, which reflects the ambition of our clubs to rise through the pyramid and aim for the top.

To ensure stability, clarity for clubs, and maintain high standards, criteria is put in place, so our competitions are played on an equal footing and to provide consistency. This is essential for good match day experiences for players, volunteers, referees and spectators.

Consistency of matchday experience is also essential to improve the perceptions of the game and its reputation. And by showing the game off in the best possible light, we have a product that is marketable and ripe for commercial attention and support. That's why, whether someone is a club official, player, or SWF staff, we each have a role to deliver the best possible product to entice new investment and to continue to grow our sport well.

From the base of the pyramid right to the very top, the criterion intensifies with each step. This helps clubs graduate and prepare accordingly in order that they can attain what they need for the league they are in. That means, that in a club's journey and if they manage to gain promotion and rise through our pyramid, they have clarity about what they need to do and are well equipped along the way. We are proud that this helps the wider growth of the game through the focus on encouraging clubs to have a youth pathway to help nurture future talent and provide sustainability for the club. SWF does not create criteria in isolation and works with our relevant committees to ensure that while standards are not only stretching to make competitions the best they can be they are also realisable and achievable.

SWF looks forward to working with clubs to ensure that the 26/27 season is a great one that continues to build and move our game forward. We appreciate all that clubs do to make this happen.

Personnel

It is important that for each role that the post holder has a job description and a clear outline of their duties.

If a post holder is employed by the club, you must ensure the club are adhering to employment laws and minimum wage regulations.

Post holders should be appropriately qualified for their positions and maintain a compliant account on Comet.

Minimum standards for compliant officials include completion of a Children's Wellbeing E-Learning, Mental Health e-learning, Self-declaration and PVG Scheme membership (regulated roles). Regulated roles as per the Disclosure Act (in Scotland 2020) must have a valid PVG within 3 years; failure to have a PVG within a regulated role is a criminal offence. Clubs should also hold a signed Code of Conduct for all officials.

Physiotherapy - It is important to help maintain the physical health of players across both leagues. Physiotherapy access is therefore critical. Clubs will have weekly access to a Physiotherapist and/or clinic. Any physiotherapist utilised directly by the club as part of core 'staff' must be identified within the club admin system and be fully registered with the appropriate professional body. Certification should be uploaded to their Comet profile. For the avoidance of doubt, physiotherapists are not required to be present on match days.

First aid - A sports first aider (as a minimum) must be present at training and games and must have a fully stocked first aid kit that can be accessed easily from the pitch or training areas. This individual must have attended a recognised sports first aid course and provided SWF with a copy of their certificate evidencing their qualifications. First Aiders must have a PVG issued by SWF from 1st January 2023 or a Grassroots PVG covering adults and children.

Wellbeing and Protection - Each club shall have an individual in place to fulfil the role of a Wellbeing and Protection Officer (WPO) and be prepared to support the well-being needs of adult players as well as recognising that the child well-being and

protection policy and UNCR apply to players under 18. The WPO should have a job description at the club and must also ensure that the safe selection policy is adhered to by coaches of the first (and all) team(s). This individual must have attended or signed up to attend the following in accordance with SWF's Child Wellbeing & Protection Policy. In addition to the above compliance on Comet a WPO must also complete the Managing Children's Wellbeing in Scottish Football Course. This role is regulated and requires a PVG.

Club Secretary – This is a regulated role and requires a PVG.

Committee - Each club shall have a committee, and within that committee, as a minimum, have the following: Club Chairperson, Club Secretary, Club Treasurer, and CWPO. Each individual should be named during the pre-affiliation process and be in possession of an up-to-date job description outlining their duties. Should there be any further postholders, they must also be itemised. All individuals must be registered on Comet. Good practice is that the CWPO must not hold any other role in the club/team to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

Club Statutes

Club statutes are the fundamental, legally recognised rules governing a club's organisation, purpose, and operations. They define membership rules, committee structure, and status.

- All clubs shall have an up-to-date constitution that they must submit to SWF in the pre-affiliation process.
- All clubs must itemise within that when they have held their AGM
- All clubs must provide minutes from their most recent AGM
- The club shall be required to provide a copy of its annual financial statements which have been approved by the club members at a General meeting. The financial statements shall consist of, as a minimum, Profit and Loss Account and Balance sheet. Approval shall be evidenced by the minutes of the General meeting.
- Should any club have a memorandum of understanding with another club (e.g. to link up a pathway to a first team) then that should also be submitted to SWF along with an outline of governance arrangements.
- Should any club have a different name from their pathway, then that too should also be disclosed as per the SWF Articles of Association

- Clubs must also present proof of a bank account and that the name on the account matches that which they present to SWF on their constitution
- Clubs must provide evidence of public liability and personal accident insurance.
- Clubs must provide evidence of a policy or code of conduct that deals with unacceptable behaviour from players, coaches, officials and spectators.
- Clubs must provide their Wellbeing Policy.
- Club should have a clear set of policies and pathways for any player that may wish to raise wellbeing concerns.

Ground

Clubs shall have a designated home ground for the duration of each season for all matches unless unforeseen circumstances occur. As per competition rules, in this scenario clubs must seek permission from the League Administrator to use another venue. A club's designated alternative venue must not fall within the same grounds as the primary pitch to guarantee the alternative venue is viable where the designated pitch is not. At least one venue should be an artificial surface and be floodlit.

The alternative ground should be outlined at the start of the season and provided to the League Administrator during the pre-affiliation process. As per above, all clubs must submit a formal request to the League Administrator in the event of them requiring to use their named alternative ground. No clubs shall be permitted to use their alternative ground for more than four Championship fixtures per season, unless due to exceptional circumstances, subject to Management Committee approval.

All grounds must comply with prevailing Health and Safety regulations, and, where applicable, have relevant certification issued by the local authority when required

Health and Safety

Clubs must ensure that players, officials, spectators are kept safe for the period of time where they are in attendance for a fixture. This includes appropriate First aid provision, signage and emergency plans. Clubs should have risk assessments in place to identify and evaluate harm.

Medical Provision

A medical risk assessment should be conducted to identify risks for participants and the appropriate actions a club would undertake in the case of an emergency. This should include on-field injury, injury or illness of a spectator. Within the risk assessment, the club should detail the appropriate personnel with first aid qualifications, where the nearest hospital is in case of emergency, as well as the nearest Automated External Defibrillators.

Clubs are responsible for ensuring the appropriate medical equipment is available through their first aid equipment and any possible supplementary requirements to ensure player wellbeing during an injury.

Media

Growth of the women's game relies on clubs working together to increase visibility. Media platforms are the best way to spread the word of the women's game. Clubs should have a nominated individual who engages on social media to promote the women's game. Club photographers should aim to capture content to share with SWF and to promote the club and the league. Those should be done as per the SWF's media policy and with appropriate permissions. Connections with local media outlets are also encouraged.

Clubs should utilise social media platforms to advertise match details and final scores at minimum. Clubs should utilise the MyScottishFootball App.

The league actively deploys photographers to fixtures. Images are used for promotional materials. Players must permit the use of their images, a player wishing to withdraw permission must contact SWF.

Player Pathway

The sustainability of our clubs is at the heart of requiring a full pathway. Clubs should be applying the appropriate focus on the development of new and emerging talent and not solely on the senior game. A full pathway enables clubs to be sustainable and ensures that young players know they can progress into senior football. This criterion is mandatory for the Championship.

Clubs must have a full player pathway (up to a minimum of 16's). Partnerships with another local club to help create a pathway will only be considered subject to the agreement of the Perform and Win Committee and SWF Board. Full pathway is defined as follows: 12s, 14s – 16s, expansion of this pathway can also include 18s or the development team, where that is appropriate and in line with SWF rules.

Commercial

As a pre-requisite of entry into Scottish Women's Football, your club is committed to comply with the obligations associated with commercial arrangements which support the leagues. Failure to do so may result in a sanction. Clubs will provide members to attend meetings, utilise appropriate branding and ensure the reputation of SWF and its partners is maintained.

General

Clubs will be actively involved in League meetings and engagement sessions, whether this be in-person, online or via surveys issued by SWF. Clubs will engage in activities promoting the well-being of players such as period dignity, Show racism the Red card, Stonewall: Rainbow laces, etc.

