

## REGULATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE WINTER WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID, THE FA WSL AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Winter Women's Football Pyramid shall comprise a system by which promotion and relegation links shall exist between participating leagues (the "Leagues") and shall be operated in accordance with these regulations.

The aims and objectives of the Winter Women's Football Pyramid are:

- (a) To provide clubs with a level of competitive football appropriate to their playing ability, stadium/ground facilities and economic means.
- (b) To provide a framework for discussion on matters of policy and common interest to leagues and clubs.
- (c) To allow the seasonal movement of clubs.

All leagues, and clubs participating from time to time in such leagues (the "Clubs"), shall be bound by these regulations until such time they resign in writing from the Winter Women's Football Pyramid. All leagues will be required to sign a copy of these regulations as and when required by the FA Women's Football Committee ("FAWFC").

### 2. POSITION OF A LEAGUE IN THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID

- 2.1 The structure of the Women's Winter and Summer Football Pyramids are set out at Appendix A.

Reserve Sections/Divisions sit outside of the Winter and Summer Pyramids.

- 2.2 Any league wishing to become part of the Winter Women's Football Pyramid at Step W5 must advise The Football Association in such form and/or providing such information as shall be required by the FAWFC from time to time. The decision as to whether or not a league should be admitted to, and their position in the Winter Women's Football Pyramid shall be made by the FAWFC.
- 2.3 Any league whose membership of the Winter Women's Football Pyramid is suspended or withdrawn by the FAWFC, or due to resignation by the league, will not be eligible to participate in any business of the Winter Women's Football Pyramid, including the promotion and relegation process, during the period of suspension or after the date of such withdrawal or resignation of membership.

### 3. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PROMOTION AND RELEGATION

- 3.1 The Winter Women's Football Pyramid shall provide for the seasonal promotion and relegation of clubs between Steps within the system. A league that signifies its acceptance to be bound by these regulations must be in a position to promote and relegate clubs at the conclusion of each season. In extenuating circumstances, where a league is not in a position to relegate due to that league not being up to strength, they must obtain the permission of the FAWFC.
- 3.2 A club shall be promoted or relegated to the correct designated league in the Winter Women's Football Pyramid according to their County FA affiliation, unless complying with the provisions of Regulation 4.2.

### 4. DETAILED PROMOTION AND RELEGATION ISSUES

- 4.1 Eligibility criteria, including ground grading, shall be agreed between the FAWFC and the various leagues. Details of the requirements at each Step are contained in the Winter Women's Football Pyramid Ground Grading Document as published by The Football Association.

4.2 It may be necessary from time to time to move clubs between leagues at the same Step to accommodate the movement of clubs by normal promotion and relegation. Where this is necessary, no club will be asked to move more than once in any three seasons, unless it would be advantageous to do so earlier than three seasons, as determined by the FAWFC.

4.3 Subject to any potential and subsequent changes to the competition structure referred to below, at the conclusion of each Season, (unless set out otherwise below), the following procedures will apply:

*Step W1 and Step S2*

For the 2016/2017 Season only, the club crowned champion of The FA Women's Premier League at the end of The FA Women's Premier League season will be promoted to The FA WSL 2 (Step S2). Any such promotion will be in accordance with the league rules of The FA Women's Premier League and The FA Women's Super League and the competition structure in place following the relevant club's promotion\*.

\*The current structure of The FA WSL and women's summer football pyramid is under review and promotion to The FA WSL will be promotion to the competition structure agreed in respect of The FA WSL by The Women's Football Board and The FA WSL Management Committee

*Step W1 and Step W2*

The Clubs in the bottom two places in each of the two divisions at Step W1 (FAWPL Northern and Southern Divisions) will be relegated to Step W2 (FAWPL Division Ones). They will be replaced by the Clubs finishing in 1st position in each of the Leagues at Step W2 subject to the ground grading criteria for Step W1.

*Step W2 and Step W3*

The Clubs in the bottom two places in each of the four divisions at Step W2 will be relegated to Step W3 (Regional League Premier Divisions). They will be replaced by the Clubs finishing in 1st position in each of the Leagues at Step W3. Should a Club finishing in 1st position not wish to be considered for promotion, then the Club finishing in 2nd or 3rd place may take its place. Clubs finishing lower than 3rd place will not be considered for promotion.

*Step W3 and Step W4*

The Clubs in the bottom two places in each of the eight Leagues at Step W3 will be replaced by the Clubs finishing in 1st place in each of the divisions at Step W4 (Regional Leagues 1st Divisions). Should the ground of a Club finishing in 1st position be deemed not suitable by the respective management committee for Step W3, then a Club finishing in 2nd (or 3rd) may take its place, provided that its ground does meet the requirements of Step W3.

Other promotions and relegations can occur if agreed by the Clubs in Membership or in the case of the South East Region, by the Joint Liaison Committee and with the approval of the FAWFC.

*Step W4 to Step W5*

The movement of Clubs between Steps W4 and W5 (County Leagues) will be via a promotion pool.

The Clubs at Step W5 can apply to the FAWFC to be considered for promotion to the relevant League at Step W4. Application must be made by 31 March and priority will be based on the finishing positions of the Clubs at Step W5. In the event that the Champion Club at Step W5 has not applied for promotion by the deadline date, they should still be considered for promotion to Step W4.

The FAWFC, in consultation with the relevant Joint Liaison Committee, shall decide which Clubs shall be promoted taking into account the number of vacancies after any relegation has occurred.

### *Play-Off Matches*

Where the appropriate Joint Liaison Committee decides that a number of play-off matches are required for promotion and relegation, then these play-off matches shall be organised at the end of the Season, provided that the Clubs were given notice prior to the start of that Season or, if such notice is not possible due to circumstances during the Season, in agreement with all Clubs involved with these play-off matches.

### *Steps within the same League*

In exceptional circumstances, the promotion and relegation within the Steps in the same League may be decided by majority of those Clubs and the League Management Committee eligible to vote and in attendance at a Special General Meeting or Annual General Meeting, subject to approval of the FAWFC.

### *Reserve Teams*

Where a Reserve Section/Division exists in a Regional League, any Reserve Teams, or any additional teams of the Clubs already members of the Winter Women's Football Pyramid, currently in that Regional League's Step W4 shall move to the Reserve Section/Division when it is established. Any Reserve Team, or any additional teams of the Clubs already playing in the Winter Women's Football Pyramid, promoted from the County League shall take their place in such Reserve Section/ Division where one exists.

Where a Reserve Section/Division does not exist in a Regional League, Reserve Teams are not permitted to play above Step W4.

## **5. THE MOVEMENT OF CLUBS WITHIN THE WINTER WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID OTHER THAN BY PROMOTION OR RELEGATION**

- 5.1 Movement of a club from participation in one league to another is not permitted other than by promotion and relegation save with the approval of the FAWFC, such approval being final and binding.
- 5.2 A Club shall be permitted to apply to the FAWFC to compete in a League sanctioned by any County FA, regardless of whether the Club is in Membership of it, where the Club can establish that the travelling required to compete in a League sanctioned by a County FA is less onerous than the travelling that would be required to compete in the appropriate League sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable). The FAWFC shall decide, at its absolute discretion, whether this exception applies and its decision shall be final and not subject to appeal.
- 5.3 Any club proposing to move from one league to another must make appropriate applications to resign from and be elected to the relevant leagues in accordance with the rules and regulations of those leagues. Any such notice must in any event, and regardless of any provisions to the contrary in a league's rules and regulations, be given to both leagues and the FAWFC by 1st April in the relevant year in order to be valid, or once promotion and/or relegation has been decided.
- 5.4 If a Club (whether a Members' Club or a Company) is liquidated or withdrawn or removed from a League/Division in the Women's Football Pyramid and then wishes to reform and/or re-enter the Women's Football Pyramid the following Season, unless otherwise determined by the FAWFC, it will be allowed to make an application only to join a League/Division a minimum of two Steps below the League/Division in which it was a member when liquidated, withdrawn or removed (e.g. from Step S1 to Step W1 or below, from Step S2 to Step W2 or below, from Step W1 to Step W3 or below etc.). This relates only to Clubs that wish to reform and/or return for the following Season and subject to the approval of the FAWFC.
- 5.5 In the event that a league in the Women's Football Pyramid ceases to exist, the clubs previously belonging to that league would be placed at the next highest level of the Women's Football Pyramid for the following season, unless otherwise requested by a club

or the FAWFC decides that there is a strong reason for that club being placed elsewhere in the Women's Football Pyramid.

- 5.6 A Club may apply by 31 March to the League, in which it has its Membership, for voluntary relegation to a League/Division one Step below at the end of current Season after discharging its full obligations to the League. Any such successful application shall count as one of the relegation places from that League at the end of current Season and the League shall adjust its remaining relegation place(s) accordingly. Any disputes shall be referred to FAWFC.

## **6. ELECTION OF A CLUB INTO A LEAGUE**

- 6.1 In normal circumstances a Club can enter the Winter Women's Football Pyramid only at Step W5 (County League level) and only to the County League of their Parent County Association.

- 6.2 Any Club shall be permitted to compete in a League sanctioned by any County FA, regardless of whether the Club is in Membership of it, where the Club can establish that the travelling required to compete in a League sanctioned by a County FA is less onerous than the travelling that would be required to compete in the appropriate League sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable). The FAWFC shall decide, whether this exception applies.

- 6.3 In exceptional circumstances a League may seek approval from the FAWFC to elect a Club not currently in membership of a League within the Winter Women's Football Pyramid provided that there is: (a) a vacancy within its constitution (b) the Club meets the entry criteria and (c) promotion and relegation issues have been satisfied.

## **7. WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CONFERENCE**

The Women's Football Conference (the Conference) will comprise of representatives from leagues within the Winter Women's Football Pyramid and the FAWFC with the objective to take steps to protect and further the interests of Women's and Girls' Association Football.

## **8. JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEES**

Regional Joint Liaison Committees (JLC's) will be established to consider matters relating to the development of the Winter Women's Football Pyramid in their regions. In particular JLC's will be responsible for recommending the promotion and relegation of clubs between Steps W4 & W5.

In the case of the South East Region, the JLC may be responsible for determining the promotion and relegation between Steps W3 and W4 where appropriate.

The Joint Liaison Committees will be established on a regional basis and will comprise of representatives of the Regional League and the appropriate County Leagues.

Both the Conference and the JLC's may refer a matter to the FAWFC for determination.

## **9. PLAYING ORDER OF PRECEDENCE IN THE WOMEN'S PYRAMID OF FOOTBALL**

Any Club with more than one team in any League in the Women's Pyramid of Football shall always fulfill its fixtures in this order of precedence, subject to the players being properly registered with the League(s): First Team, Reserve Team, A Team and other lower teams.

A League shall deal with any breach of this Regulation by the teams of a member Club playing within the same League. Any breach of this Regulation by teams of a Club playing in more than one League shall be reported to FAWFC who shall deal with it as appropriate.

## **10. APPEAL PROCEDURE**

Any dispute or difference between a league and a club relating to promotion and relegation issues and/or other eligibility criteria should be referred for determination to the FAWFC. Any referral must be carried out in accordance with The Football Association's appeal

procedure and be submitted at the offices of The Football Association, Wembley Stadium, PO Box 1966, London SW1P 9EQ within 14 days of the posting of the relevant decision and must be accompanied by a fee of £100.

#### **11. THE FA WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE**

The FA Women's Super League shall form the Summer Pyramid of Women's Football.

The "Close Season" for The FA Women's Super League Divisions One and Two only shall be defined as the period between 1 December and 31 December inclusive in each calendar year, save where The Association makes an order to the contrary, during which no Club in the FA Women's Super League shall play any matches. For the FA Women's Super League Development Divisions the 'Close Season' shall be defined as the period between 1 June to 30 June inclusive in each calendar year.

This shall not affect the Close Season for any League in the Winter Women's Football Pyramid, which shall be in accordance with Rule B8 of the Rules of The Association.

#### **12. GIRLS' TEAMS PLAYING IN LEAGUES**

- 12.1 Any Clubs wishing to enter a new girls' team into a league competition shall only do so if the league competition is sanctioned by the County FA with which the Club has Membership. If the Club is in membership of more than one County FA, the league competition must be sanctioned by the Club's Parent Association.

This Regulation applies to all new teams, irrespective of whether a Club has another team already competing in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or any County FA.

- 12.2 The following exceptions to the above regulation shall apply, and a new team shall be permitted to compete in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or any County FA, regardless of whether the Club is in Membership of it, where the Club can establish -

- (i) The travelling required to compete in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or another County FA is less onerous than the travelling that would be required to compete in the appropriate league sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable); or
- (ii) There is no appropriate age group division in the league sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable) for the new team to compete in; or
- (iii) The league sanctioned by the County FA with which it has Membership (or its Parent Association, where applicable) does not offer the format of football that the Club wishes the new team to compete in eg 11 v 11, 7 v 7.

The County FA with which the Club has its Membership, or the Club's Parent Association where applicable, shall decide, whether any one of the above exceptions applies and so whether the team may compete in a league sanctioned by The Football Association or another County FA, for one Season only.

- 12.3 Teams may continue to participate in any league that they have participated in prior to season 2009 / 10, irrespective of whether that league is sanctioned by The Football Association or a County FA other than the one with which that team's Club has its Membership, or its Parent Association, where applicable.

#### **13. PROCEDURES FOR THE DETERMINATION OF ANY MATTER, DISPUTE OR DIFFERENCE BY THE FAWFC**

- 13.1 The FAWFC may adopt such procedures for the determination of any matter, dispute or difference as it considers appropriate and expedient, having regard to the aims and objectives set out at Regulation 1. The FAWFC may require the attendance at a meeting or the written observations of any League or Club, as it considers appropriate to assist its determination.

- 13.2 (a) Any dispute or difference between a League and a Club relating to promotion and relegation issues and/or other eligibility criteria must be referred for determination to the FAWFC; such determination shall be final and binding.
- (b) Any other decision of the FAWFC shall be subject to a right of appeal to an Appeal Board. The decision of that Appeal Board shall be final and binding on all parties. All referrals of appeals shall be conducted in accordance with the Regulations for Football Association Appeals.
- 13.3 The FAWFC may, at its discretion, delegate the resolution of any matter, dispute or difference arising under these Regulations to any body it considers to be appropriate (including a subcommittee or commission which may include members of council not on the FAWFC or a body constituted by a County Football Association).

APPENDIX A - Proposed

SUMMER WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID

Step S1 FA WSL ONE

Step S2 FA WSL TWO

WINTER WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID

Step W1 FA Women's Premier League Northern Division      FA Women's Premier League Southern Division

Step W2 FAWPL Division One North      FAWPL Division One Midland      FAWPL Division One South East      FAWPL Division One South West

Step W3 NE Regional Premier Division      NW Regional Premier Division      WM Regional Premier Division      EM Regional Premier Division      London & SE Regional Premier Division      Eastern Regional Premier Division      Southern Regional Premier Division      SW Regional Premier Division

Step W4 Regional League Division Ones

Step W5 County Leagues