REGULATIONS GOVERNING ULSTER BRANCH WOMEN'S LEAGUE AND CUP COMPETITIONS 2025-2026

1. INTRODUCTION

(a) These regulations govern all Ulster Women's Rugby Competitions.

(b) All Clubs competing in competitions shall be deemed to have accepted and to be bound by these regulations.

(c) In these regulations:-
" **Branch**" means the Ulster Branch of the Union;
"**Branch Byelaws and Regulations"** means the Committee of the Branch provided for in Byelaw 7 of the Branch Byelaws and Regulations;
"Clubs Committee" means the Clubs Committee established as a sub-committee of the Branch Committee as provided for in Byelaw 14 of the Branch Byelaws and Regulations;
"Competitions Management Committee" means the Competitions Management Committee established as a sub-committee of the Clubs Committee as provided for in Regulation 2 below;
"Game" means rugby football played in accordance with the Laws of the Game;
"IRFU Regulations" means the Regulations made by the Union;
"Laws of the Game" means the Laws of the Game as laid down by World Rugby;
"Union" means the Irish Rugby Football Union;
"Cup Competition" means the main competition and any subsidiary competition(s).

2. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF WOMEN'S RUGBY COMPETITIONS

(a) The Clubs Committee shall appoint a sub-committee called the Competitions Management Committee ("The CMC"), which shall administer and manage Ulster Women's Rugby Competitions, performing the functions assigned to it under the provisions of these regulations.

(b) The CMC shall decide:-
(i) the dates on which matches, including replays, shall be played
(ii) the venues of matches
(iii) whether or not extra time, if necessary, shall be played

(c) The CMC shall arrange to make the draws for all knock-out competitions

(d) The CMC may at any time scrutinise team lists, reinstatements, referees' reports or other relevant material and apply competition regulations as appropriate.

(e) The CMC may refer matters of conduct and responsibility, or of discipline, to the Honorary Secretary of the Ulster Branch.

3. APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE CMC

(a) Save only as provided in (b) below, the Clubs Committee, at its regular monthly meeting, shall be the final arbiter of any decision of the CMC which is disputed by a Club, and a Club seeking to dispute any such decision as aforesaid shall send its appeal, and the grounds thereof, to the Honorary Secretary of the Clubs Committee in writing on Club notepaper or by e-mail on electronic Club letterhead signed by the Honorary Secretary or President of the Club to reach the Honorary Secretary of the Clubs Committee at least 24 hours before such regular monthly meeting.

(b) Where reference to the next regular monthly meeting of the Clubs Committee, under the provisions of (a) above, is impractical a Club may appeal direct to the Branch Committee in writing on Club note paper or by e-mail on electronic Club letterhead signed by the Honorary Secretary or President of the Club and addressed to the Honorary Secretary of the Branch. Any such appeal must be lodged within 96 hours of the Club receiving official notification of the CMC decision and must be accompanied by a sum of £250 which may, at the discretion of the Branch Committee, be refunded in whole or in part.

4. DURATION OF GAME

(a) Save as provided in (b) below, the duration of a match shall be 80 minutes subject to the Laws of the Game.

(b) The knock-out stages of all Cup Competitions and all play off matches for promotion and relegation will be concluded as follows:
   (i) If Clubs are tied at full time, extra time of 10 minutes will be played.
   (ii) If still tied, the Club who has scored the most tries will be the winner.
   (iii) If still tied, the team who scored the 1st try shall be the winner.
   (iv) If no tries have been scored, the team that scored the first points in the match shall be the winner.
   (v) If the match is scoreless, penalty kicks shall be taken to decide the winner.

(c) In the finals of Cup Competitions where, after extra time, the match still ends in a draw the Cup will be shared.

5. REFEREES

(a) The Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees shall (whenever possible) appoint Referees for all League and Cup matches.

(b) In relation to Law 6 (Laws of the Game) if a referee, having been duly appointed for a Cup or League game, is not in attendance, or if such appointment was not made, or if a referee who was appointed for a Cup or League game is unable to officiate for the whole period of a match, the game as scheduled may be postponed or in the latter case may be abandoned and reported to the CMC.

(c) If either Club offers an alternative person to referee (including a referee spectating at the ground) in circumstances covered by (b) to enable the match to be played or concluded, agreement to the arrangements should be confirmed by both Captains signing the team lists submitted to the Referee before the game or before the game is concluded.

(d) Save as provided in (c) above, changes of a referee's appointment after arrival at a ground can only take place with the approval of a Referee's Selector.

(e) Referees may refuse to permit players to take part in a game if not wearing the registered Club jersey. If the registered colours of teams in a match are of such similarity as would present playing or refereeing difficulties, it is the responsibility of the home team to make the necessary change and to notify the Branch and opponents of such change.

6. COMPETITIONS PROVISIONS

(a) The team winning a league match shall be awarded four points. In the case of a drawn league game, each team shall receive two points. One bonus point will be awarded to a team scoring four or more tries in a league match, and one bonus point will be awarded to a team losing by seven points or less. Any team failing to fulfil a league fixture shall have five points deducted from its league points scored, and their opponents shall receive five points.

(b) Save as provided in Regulation 12(b) below, where a team is unable to field either sufficient numbers to play a competitive league or cup fixture, or a suitably trained and experienced front row, but chooses to fulfil the fixture, the following provisions will apply :-

(i) If both teams have at least 10 players a friendly game with equally matched player numbers and/or uncontested scrums shall take place. Where such a friendly game takes place, the team forfeiting the game shall not be deducted any points or be subject to a fine, and their opposition shall be awarded 5 points.

(ii) In the Championship leagues if both teams have at least 12 players, the fixture shall be played in modified format (Game On) as a competitive game for league points. If the team requesting Game On wins the fixture they are unable to gain a 4-try bonus point.

(iii) If any team forfeiting has fewer than 10 players no friendly game can take place. They will be deducted 5 points and the opposition awarded 5 points.

(c) Should teams finish equal on total league points the position in the division will be decided according to the league points won in the fixture(s) between them. If this does not produce a winner then the ranking will be decided as follows: the total average difference between points scored and points conceded in the games played in their entire division; if this fails to produce a result then the team scoring the greatest number of points per game played in their entire division. For the purposes

of WAIL Junior Cup and/or Play-off qualification, the total points shall be the aggregate of league points over both phases.

(d) Any team conceding a fixture in a cup competition, for which it has entered, may, AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CMC, be debarred from entering that competition in the following season.

(e) Any team scratching an away league fixture will forfeit home advantage in the return fixture. If circumstances permit, this may be carried forward to the next season at the discretion of the CMC.

(f) Once a margin of 60 points between teams in a League or Cup fixture is reached, the match shall end. Where, in such circumstances, a match is ended early, teams are encouraged to play out the remaining time as a friendly, but no further points scored by either team shall be counted in the result.

7. TEAMSHEETS AND NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

(a) The full names of the players of each team, and the number of their playing position, must be given to the referee before the start of each match and he/she shall retain same and forward them to the Branch if requested.

(b) The referee shall submit the result and number of tries scored by each team by text to the Branch immediately following the end of the game.

(c) In the event of any matter of importance affecting a match, including red and yellow cards or serious injury the referee shall submit a report about the incident to the Branch within 24 hours of the end of the game.

(d) No later than 96 hours from the end of a game, each Club shall submit to the Branch an electronic team sheet setting out the names and registration numbers of the players who played or were named as substitutes.

8. REGISTRATION, ELIGIBILITY AND MOVEMENT OF PLAYERS, AND PAYMENTS TO PLAYERS

(a) Clubs with more than one team will comply with the reinstatement provisions for the movement of players between each team (see section 9 below).

(b) All Clubs are subject to the provisions of Regulation 6 of the Regulations of the Irish Rugby Football Union ("the IRFU Regulations").

(c) In addition, the following provisions shall apply:-

(i) A player shall not be eligible to play for a club unless she is registered with that Club in accordance with the IRFU Regulations, and in the case of knock-out Cup Competitions she shall be ineligible to take part in any such Competition unless she shall have been so registered before the commencement of the Competition.

(ii) A player may not transfer as a playing member from one Club to another unless she is free from any financial obligation with the Club she is leaving.

(iii) A player whose transfer has not been completed in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 6.4.4 of the IRFU Regulations by the 31 January in any year will not be eligible to play for her new Club in Branch League or Cup Competitions.

(iv) Any player, which would include a school-leaver, entering adult rugby for the first time, or a player enrolling in university and joining the university Club, shall be eligible to play in knock-out cup competitions after the commencement of any such competition provided such a player is registered with her new Club by 31 January at the latest.

(d) The "dual status" player who is a bona fide registered playing member of a Championship Club may play for a Club in a Premiership League provided the following regulations are observed. A Premiership League Club shall be limited to selecting or playing not more than three such players in one season. Selection shall include players who are selected as replacements/substitutes for Premiership League matches.

(e) Players shall not represent other Clubs playing in the Premiership League. Players can only play up the divisions. Players from higher division Clubs shall not play for lower division Clubs.

(f) A Premiership League Club wishing to use the dual status principle shall follow the procedures set out below. A request shall be made to the Secretary of the player's Club. When permission is obtained, an application shall be made in writing to the CMC at least forty-eight hours prior to each match in which they intend to play, enclosing the written permission of the Championship Club.

(g) The name/s of dual status player/s shall be indicated on the Premiership League Club team-sheet (D/S). Dual status players shall satisfy regulation 8 relating to player eligibility. A player shall only be a dual status member of one Premiership League Club in any one season.

(h) Youths who have not reached their 18th birthday are ineligible to participate in any form of Adult contact (XV's or 7s) rugby.

(i) A player who attains their 18th birthday during the season shall be eligible to play in adult competitions. If the player's own Club does not have an Adult Section they may apply as a "dual status" Youth/Adult player with another Club. The adult registration deadlines and reinstatement requirements do not apply to dual status Youth/Adult Players, and they may play in both grades of rugby for the remainder of the season.

(j) A dual status player who is a bona fide playing member of a Premiership or Championship League Club may also play for an All-Ireland League Club in the same

season subject to the provisions of IRFU WAIL Regulation 15. If the dual status player is from a Championship Club, they must obtain prior permission from the CMC. An application must be made in writing at least 48 hours prior to each match in which they intend to play.

(k) A dual status player, returning to play for her Premiership or Championship League Club shall be subject to the provisions of regulation 9 below.

(l) The following players, if correctly registered on the IRFU Registration system (Rugby Connect) are eligible to play in league and cup competitions:

(i) A player who qualifies to play for Ireland under World Rugby Regulations and/or holds a European or British passport, and is resident in Ireland or Northern Ireland by 24 September:

(ii) Any player not qualifying under (i) above visiting Ireland or Northern Ireland and in possession of a minimum one-year visa. This player must have obtained World Rugby clearance, and for the purposes of interpretation, is classified as an overseas player and shall be nominated as such to the CMC.

(iii) A club playing in the Premiership is permitted to register a maximum of two overseas players providing they take up and remain in residence on or before 24 September.

(iv) In exceptional circumstances a club may apply for an overseas player to be considered eligible for the league/cup where the player arrives in Ireland or Northern Ireland after 24 September but before 1 January.

(v) In the case of (iii) a player who has resided for a minimum of one year in Ireland or Northern Ireland, they may then apply to the CMC to be considered a Non Overseas player.

(vi) For the purposes of this provision residency/resident is defined as “Permanent place of residence”.

9. REINSTATEMENTS

(a) The CMC shall have the power to reinstate:-

(i) players who have become disqualified from league competitions, and

(ii) players (other than players selected by a Club in breach of Regulation 13 below), who have become disqualified from cup competition, provided that application is made on the electronic team-sheet submitted to the Branch under the provisions of Regulation 7 above and provided that such application is received by the Branch by 10am 3 working days before the match in which the player seeks to play.

(b) A player becomes disqualified if, during the current season, she has played, in aggregate five or more Cup and league matches for a team in her Club playing in the next highest grade in which that Club has a team, or once for a team in a higher grade of league than the next highest grade. For the purposes of this regulation the

grades of League shall be 1. AIL, 2. Ulster Premiership League and 3. Championship League.

(c) For the avoidance of doubt, the power of the CMC to reinstate a player under the provision of (a) above shall only arise after that player has become disqualified in accordance with the provisions of (b) above.

(d) A Club applying to reinstate a player shall:-
   (i) provide the reason for such reinstatement;
   (ii) state the league sections from, and to, which the player is to be reinstated;
   (ii) provide the full playing record of the player for that season; and
   (iii) include details of any previous reinstatements in respect of the player during that season.

(e) A player may be reinstated a maximum of twice in a season, save in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the CMC.

(f) A Club applying to reinstate a player in exceptional circumstances, as provided in (e), above, shall provide full and detailed reasons in writing in support of its application.

(g) A player cannot be reinstated on the grounds that she is returning from injury unless she has been unable, by virtue of that injury, to play for at least the previous two weeks.

(h) A Club may not apply, in any one week, to reinstate more than 3 players.

(i) For the purposes of this Regulation the grades of League shall be: (i) AIL (ii) Ulster Women's Premiership league and (iii) Ulster Women's Championship leagues.

10. UNQUALIFIED PLAYERS

If any Club includes in its team, any player who is not duly qualified to represent it, the team shall be deemed to have lost the match, and in the case of a league match will have two points deducted from its league total to date.

11. FALSIFYING TEAMSHEETS

If any Club includes in its team any player who is not duly qualified to represent it, and includes that player in the electronic team-sheet under a name or registration number other than her own, the team shall, in addition to any sanctions which may be applied under the provisions of Regulation 10 above - (i) in the case of a league match, have sixteen points deducted from its league total to date; (ii) in the case of a match in a cup competition, may be debarred from entering that competition in the following season, and the Club may be subject to further sanction by the Disciplinary Committee of the Branch if its conduct is held to be detrimental to the best interests of the Game.

12. THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS AND THE REPLACEMENT AND SUBSTITUTION OF PLAYERS

(a) Teams participating in the women's rugby competitions must comply with Law 3 of the Game in respect of the nomination and replacement/substitution of players.

(b) Subject to (a) above and the provisions set out in Regulation 6, the following will apply in respect of the number of players:

(i) All teams may nominate up to 22 players of whom up to 7 may play as substitutes or replacements, and such substitutes shall be rolling, subject to limits as per World Rugby Laws

(ii) Where a team has 15 or more players it shall take the field with 15 players.

(iv) Where a Club is aware that it cannot field 15 players in a team, where possible it should inform the opposition and referee by at least 6.00 pm the day prior to the game of its starting numbers.

(c) (i) All games played in the Premiership and Championship A will be played under full scrummaging rules. (ii) Save as provided in (b) above, all games played in the Championship B will be played under U19 scrummaging rules.

(iii) All games played in the Premiership cups will be played under full scrummaging laws. All games played in Championship Cups will be played under full scrummaging laws, except when one or both teams are from Championship B in which case the game will be played under U19 scrummaging rules.

(d) Where a team is unable to field a suitably trained and experienced front row in a cup game, such that contested scrums cannot take place, that team shall forfeit the fixture.

13. CUP TIED PLAYERS

(a) A player may play for only one team in any particular Cup Competition.

(b) A Club may not select a player from a higher team to play in the semi-final or final of any cup unless the player has played in a previous round of the competition or in exceptional circumstances permission is granted by the CMC. For the purposes of this provision a player from a higher team shall be deemed to be a player who, during the current season, has played five or more matches for a higher team or teams in cup and league competitions.

14. STARTING TIMES OF MATCHES

Matches shall kick off at 2pm on the Sunday. However, if for any reason two Clubs mutually agree to an earlier date or kick off time, both Clubs shall apply in writing to the CMC on the Wednesday prior to the date of the match in question and obtain consent in writing from the CMC prior to the match. All match changes are subject to the availability of a referee.

15. CHANGE OF DATES

When the date and time of any match has been approved by the CMC the same shall not be changed without the prior permission of the CMC, other than under the provisions of Regulation 19, and any Club or Clubs contravening this regulation shall be deemed to have lost the match unless the CMC rules otherwise. Any postponed league game must be re-arranged, and notification sent to the Branch by the Home Club, within 7 days of the original date, in default of which the game will be re-arranged by the CMC.

16. REFUSAL TO PLAY

(a) League and Cup matches must be completed by the date specified by the CMC.

(b) In the event of a Club failing to play a match or replay on the stipulated date or refusing to play extra time if ordered to do so by the CMC having control of the competition, it shall be adjudged to have lost the match unless the CMC consider there was a reasonable and proper cause for the refusal and, if the match is a Cup match, may be liable to a fine as provided in Regulation 17.

17. POSTPONEMENT OR CANCELLATION OF MATCHES

(a) Clubs must cancel league and cup matches from the lowest team upwards.

(b) Any Club postponing a match (with the permission of the CMC in accordance with Regulation 15 above), or cancelling a match, for any reason, must immediately notify:-

(i) The Honorary Secretary or an authorised official of the opposing Club

(ii) The Branch in writing or e-mail (Branch will notify Referee if cancellation is more than 24 hours before kick-off)

(iii) The Referee, if postponement or cancellation is within 24 hours of kick off. (c) Any Club failing to comply with (b) above may be liable to a fine of £100 in respect of the expenses of a referee who travels, and may, at the discretion of the CMC, be held liable to pay the travelling expenses of the visiting Club.

(c) Any team which is unable to stage a home fixture at the knock-out stage of a competition on two successive occasions will forfeit home advantage.

(d) Any Club which fails to comply with Regulation 17(b) and does not correctly notify the opposition, Branch and where appropriate the referee of a match postponement/cancellation may be liable to a fine of £100 and at the discretion of the CMC be held liable to pay the travelling expenses of a visiting Club. In addition, any Club failing to fulfill a game in the Premiership or Championship A will be fined £100.

(e) To participate in their respective cup competition, a team must be deemed to have fulfilled 75% of the league fixtures leading up to the first round of the cup, and for the avoidance of doubt any rescheduled postponed games at the start of the competition will be assumed to be completed. However, exceptional circumstances for fixture cancellations will be taken into consideration.

18. PROTESTS OR APPEALS

A Club wishing to make an official protest or appeal to the CMC in relation to a fixture must do so in writing on Club note paper or by email on electronic Club letterhead signed by the Honorary Secretary or President of the Club to reach the CMC within 96 hours after the end of the match to which it relates.

19. FITNESS OF GROUND

Prior to kick-off the Home Club shall be the sole judge of the fitness of the ground for the playing of a League or Cup match. In the case of a public ground the decision shall lie with the grounds person in charge. Once a match starts the referee is the sole judge of the fitness of the ground.