



REGULATIONS GOVERNING ULSTER BRANCH YOUTH LEAGUE AND CUP COMPETITIONS 2025-2026

SECTION 1: REGULATIONS

REGULATIONS GOVERNING YOUTH RUGBY

SECTION 1 – GENERAL REGULATIONS

1. INTERPRETATION

(a) In these Regulations:

“**Branch**” means the Ulster Branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union;

“**Branch Committee**” means the Committee of the Branch provided for in Byelaw 7 of the Byelaws and Regulations of the Branch;

“**Framework Agreement**” means the Framework Agreement for player release set out in the Explanatory Note in Appendix A, and made between schools participating in the Schools of Ireland Scheme and clubs affiliated to the Branch;

“**IRFU Regulations**” means the Regulations made by the Irish Rugby Football Union;

“**Laws of the Game**” means the Laws of the Game as laid down by World Rugby;

;

“**Matrix**” means the template agreed by the Youth Committee to assist in determining kick-off times;

“**Registration Card**” means the online registration card provided for in Regulation 6 of the IRFU Regulations;

“**Registration Number**” means the registration number provided for in Regulation 6 of the IRFU Regulations;

“**Youth Committee**” means the Youth Committee established as a sub-committee of the Committee of the Branch to manage the playing of youth rugby football by clubs affiliated to the Branch;

2. YOUTH COMMITTEE

(a) (i) The Youth Committee shall consist of the following persons:

- A chairman appointed by the Branch Committee pursuant to the provisions of Byelaw 7(ix)(c)(5) of the Byelaws and Regulations of the Branch;
- A Competitions Manager elected annually at the final meeting of the season, attended by all Youth Convenors;
- A Competitions Secretary (“the Competitions Secretary”) elected annually at the final meeting of the season, attended by all Youth Convenors.

- A Competitions Co-Ordinator (other than the Competitions Manager and the Competitions Secretary who also act as Competitions Co-Ordinators) elected annually at the final meeting of the season, attended by all Youth Convenors;
- Four Youth Representatives elected annually at the final meeting of the season, attended by all Youth Convenors.

(ii) The above members of the committee will meet monthly on the first Wednesday of October, November, December February, March April, or as required, either in person or remotely.

(b) (i) In addition to the membership, at (a) above, the Youth Committee shall also consist of the following persons:-

- A member of staff from Ulster Rugby, appointed by the Head of Rugby Development;
- A representative from the Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees ("USRFR");
- A representative from the Elite Player Programme;
- The Chair of the Mini-Rugby Committee

(ii) These members will be invited along with the Youth Convenors of all affiliated clubs to attend, in person, meetings of the committee to be held on the first Wednesday of September, January and May.

(c) The quorum for any meeting of the Youth Committee shall be four.

(d) The May meeting will be the meeting when the elections for membership of the committee for the next season will be held.

(e) The Youth Committee may issue from time to time, if it considers appropriate and necessary, guidance, information and clarification for the benefit of clubs in relation to Youth Rugby. In the event of any inconsistency between any such guidance, information, clarification and these regulations, the regulations shall prevail.

3. FIXTURES

(a) The Competitions Co-Ordinators shall arrange the Provincial League fixtures, the Regional League/Structured Friendlies fixtures and place them, together with dates for the Trophy Competitions, before the Youth Committee for approval at its May meeting

(b) A club may seek the agreement of an opposing club to play a fixture on a date before the scheduled date, as approved by the Youth Committee under the provisions of (a) above, or on the Sunday immediately following any such scheduled date; and, where agreement is reached, the home club shall notify the Competitions Co-Ordinators, and the Branch, of the change of date.

(c) The Youth Committee may, at the request of the Competitions Co-Ordinators and without prior notice, decide to terminate the League, or a Section or part thereof, on a date other than that originally approved by the Youth Committee, and the match results up to and including that date shall decide the outcome of the League, or that Section or part thereof.

(d) Any Club failing to fulfil an away League fixture shall forfeit home advantage in the return fixture or, if appropriate and at the discretion of the Youth Committee, in the equivalent fixture the following season, provided however that this provision shall not apply where a club has partly fulfilled such fixture by playing a match in at least

one of the age grade levels set out in Regulation 26.

- (e) Teams that fail to field a team for 2 matches in a row at home and/or away will be removed from the competition. Those team's remaining fixtures will be played as friendlies (and all previous results are removed).
- (f) Any club failing to fulfil a Trophy, or League Play Off fixture may, at the discretion of the Youth Committee, be debarred from entering the Trophy Competitions that or the following season. In the case of a League Play Off any home advantage will also be relinquished in the Clubs next Play off opportunity.

4. REFEREES

- (a) The USRFR shall (whenever possible) appoint referees for all League and Trophy matches.
 - (i) In relation to Law 6 of the Laws of the Game, if a referee has not been duly appointed then it is the responsibility of the home club to appoint a referee, and such referee shall be a USRFR referee, or an affiliate referee from either of the clubs participating in the match. Where the home club fails to appoint a referee as hereinbefore provided and the fixture cannot be played, it shall be deemed to have failed to fulfil the fixture and, if a League fixture, the provisions of Regulation 6(a) shall apply.
- (b) Each team shall provide a touch judge, who must not be a replacement or substitute.
- (c) The Referee is not responsible for player registration checks.
- (d) An Affiliate referee , subject to and in accordance with these regulations and , in particular paragraphs (f) and (h) below has the same responsibilities as a Referee appointed by USRFR, for the conduct of a game to which he/she has been appointed.
- (e) An Affiliate Referee can issue a Red Card. If such a card is issued the player cannot be replaced. An Affiliate Referee cannot issue a Yellow Card. In such circumstances , the Affiliate Referee should encourage the player be replaced following discussion with the coach of that player.
- (f) Referees appointed by USRFR can issue:-
 - (i) Yellow and Red cards at U14,U16 and U18 levels;
 - (ii) A player who receives such a yellow card at U14 and U16 levels shall be temporarily suspended for 5 minutes; and at U18 level shall be temporarily suspended for 7 minutes.
- (g) As an Affiliate referee is unable to report the score of a match via the USRFR system he/she must do so by email to the Competitions Secretary by email within

48 hours after the end of the game or ensure it is done within the same time periods by a Youth Representative.

5. ENTRY TO COMPETITIONS

- (a) The Youth competitions shall be competed for annually by such clubs, other than affiliated schools and Colleges of Education, as the Youth Committee shall determine.
- (b) Subject to (a) above, the following provisions shall apply:
 - (i) Each club shall inform the Competitions Secretary of the number of teams it is proposing to enter in the Youth Competitions;
 - (ii) The Youth Committee shall determine the format of the League, and the seeding of the Cup draw, for each season;
 - (iii) Subject to the discretion of the Youth Committee, a TEAM completing less than half of its fixtures, or who have taken part in less than five "Let's Play" events (as recorded on SportsLomo) will not be eligible to compete in the Trophy competitions: (The Cup, Plate, Bowl and Shield).
 - (iv) The Youth Committee will take into account the ability to field, and failure to field in the previous season, when determining which entry level to competitions.
 - (v) By entering into the Youth Competitions the club are agreeing with the Youth Regulations.
 - (vi) Confirmation of team entries will be subject to a club fulfilling its obligations to nominate by first Friday in September, an adequate panel of suitably VETTED and SAFEGUARD trained coaches on IRFU Rugby Connect. Any team which is unable to do so shall NOT be entered into league competitions .

6. COMPETITION PROVISION

- (a) The team winning a League match shall be awarded 3 points. In the case of a drawn League match each team shall receive 2 points. 1 point shall be awarded to a losing team fulfilling a fixture. Any team failing to fulfil a League fixture shall have 1 point deducted from its League points scored, and their opponents shall receive 3 points.
- (b) Save as provided in (c) below, where there is a margin of 40 or more points between the teams at any time during a League or Trophy fixture, the following provisions shall apply: -
 - (i) the referee shall end the match early and the fixture shall be awarded to the team that is leading at the time;
 - (ii) the team that is losing at the time shall not be subject to the deduction of 1 point under the provisions of (a) above; and

- (iii) the teams may play out, as a friendly, any playing time unplayed as a result of the early ending of the match, provided that:
 - (aa) the forwards from both teams are deployed as necessary between them to ensure that the scrums are equally matched at all times; and
 - (bb) such other deployments are made between the teams to ensure that both teams are otherwise as equally matched as possible.

- (c) The exception to the '40 point margin' rule above is that if, at any time during a League, or Trophy final the referee, after consultation with the Match Commissioner appointed by the Youth Committee to attend the final, nevertheless deems the match to be competitive the match shall continue until full-time or such earlier time as the referee shall deem the match to be no longer competitive.

- (d) The team accumulating the most points in the League season shall be the Section League winners at that particular age level.

- (e) If, at the end of the League season, two or more teams have the same number of League points, the winner shall be determined by applying the following criteria in the order set out below:
 - (i) the most League points won in the fixtures between teams;
 - (ii) the difference in points scored for and against in the League fixtures between those teams;

- (f) In the event of two teams still being tied, a play-off, at a neutral venue, will decide the winner.

- (g) If, at the end of full-time in the play-off, the scores shall be tied, then the winner shall be determined by applying the following criteria in the order set out below:
 - (i) The most tries scored in the game;
 - (ii) The first try scored in the game;
 - (iii) The first score in the game.

- (h) If, at the end of full-time in the play-off, neither team has scored, then the winner shall be determined through a penalty shoot-out as follows:
 - (i) Each team will nominate five players from the players on the pitch at the final whistle;
 - (ii) Each player will kick from the centre of the 22-metre line;
 - (iii) If, after their five nominated players have kicked, the teams remain deadlocked, the shoot-out will continue, on a sudden death basis, with the remaining players on the pitch at the end of full-time;

(iv) If any of the remaining players who were on the pitch at the end of full-time, are incapable, through injury, of participating in the shoot-out, both teams will compete with the same reduced numbers.

(v) If the penalty shoot-out does not produce a winner, the winner shall be the team receiving fewer red cards in the play-off;

(vi) If the application of (v) above does not produce a winner, the winner will be decided by the toss of a coin.

- (i) In the event of a draw in any game in a round of the *Trophy Competitions*, other than the final, the winner will be determined *by the provisions set out in (g) & (h) above*.
- (j) In the event of a draw after full-time in the final of the cup, plate, bowl or shield the trophy will be shared

7. TEAM SHEETS AND REGISTRATION CARDS

(a) Before the start of a match each team SHALL:

(i) provided both the referee and the opposing team with a team sheet, (the only acceptable team sheet is a hard copy downloaded from SportsLoMo) , containing the full names of its players, their registration numbers, the number of their playing position, and indicating which players are the front row cover; the team sheet must have the accurate information on it for the team that fielded on the day. Changes to team sheets made on the day must be recorded on SportsLomo within 96 hours of the fixture, and match those changes made on the team sheets handed to the referee and opposing Coach and;-

(ii) Digital Registration Cards must be available for all players with a passport style photo taken within the last 2 years and show their Name ,IRFU Number, and date of birth, for inspection by:

- (aa) the coach or manager of the opposing team;
- (bb) The Youth Convenor of the club which that team represents; and
- (cc) The Youth Committee in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 3(d).

(b) Where a team fails:-

(i) to provide a valid teamsheet in accordance with the provisions of (a)(i) above, it shall forfeit the fixture; If a teamsheet irregularity is subsequently identified, a team will also be deducted points for each of those league games; or

(ii) to produce a registration card in respect of a player in accordance with

the provisions of (a)(ii) above, such player shall be deemed to be unregistered and ineligible to play. If no valid Card is available, the player is ineligible to play.

(iii) If playing ineligible players, the team will be adjudged to have lost the match, be deducted three points from the league. And, if repeated, the team may be excluded, at the discretion of the Youth Committee, from the league for the remainder of the season. In the case of a trophy fixture the team will be adjudged to have lost the match and will not be eligible for any subsidiary competitions for that season.

- (c) The referee shall retain the information provided under (a)(i) above and forward it to the Branch if requested.
- (d) Each club shall, not later than the Wednesday of the week following every scheduled fixture, submit online to the Branch in respect of each such fixture an electronic team sheet, which shall include the names and registration numbers of its players, and if the said fixture (league, Trophy or Friendly) has been played or conceded. If the game has been conceded the non-offending side shall enter players available to play that day. The offending side shall enter a blank sheet, explaining reason for conceding.
- (e) Any club, not otherwise subject to sanction under the provisions of (b)(i) above, which fails to return such team sheet in accordance with the provisions of (d) above shall:
 - (i) in the case of a League game, result in the team being deducted 1 point; and
 - (ii) in the case of a Trophy game, result in the team being eliminated from the Trophy competition, and the game may, at the discretion of the Youth Committee, be awarded to the opposing team.
- (f) Seven days before Finals (League and Trophy Competitions) possible squad list must be forwarded to the Youth Hon Secretary for preliminary eligibility checks (this should be by uploading the squad list to SportsLoMo and notifying the Youth Hon Secretary it is ready).
- (g) It is the responsibility of the coach of each team that no in-eligible players are included.
- (h) The Youth Committee will verify all players IDs and eligibility prior to any final.
- (i) It is the home team that has the right to wear their traditional kit and the onus of switching colours is on the away team.

8. MATCH RESULTS AND REPORTS

- (a) The home club shall, by 12.00 noon on the Monday following a match, notify the Branch of the result by e-mail to youthresults@ulsterrugby.com
- (b) The Referee shall within 24 hours of the end of a game notify the Branch on-line of any of the following:-
 - (i) any red or yellow cards issued during the match and the nature of the offence in each case ,and
 - (ii) any matter of importance affecting a match , including serious injury, or referee abuse.
- (c) The Club Representative , for a player suffering a serious injury , must also complete a serious injury report and send it to the Branch , by email , within 24 hours at the end of a game.

9. REGISTRATION, ELIGIBILITY AND MOVEMENT OF PLAYERS

- 1

(a) (i) A player shall not be eligible to play for a club unless he is registered with that club and available to be selected from the SportsLoMo portal. It is the responsibility of a club to ensure that a player is eligible to play in compliance with these regulations in every respect .

(ii) Registrations must be fully completed before the last 16 of the Trophy Competitions begin.

(iii) SportsLoMo team sheets are used to validate eligibility of players and clubs must therefore ensure they record on SportsLoMo all team sheets- League, Trophy Competitions, Friendlies, (including Participation/Let's play events).

(b) A player shall not be eligible to play for that club until he is registered with that club. A player must be resident in Ireland or Northern Ireland at the time of this registration .For the purposes of this provision, resident is defined as " Permanent Place of Residence " ..

- 2

(a) A player attending a school that participates in the Schools of Ireland Scheme ,as provided for under the Framework Agreement,(see Appendix A), must have written approval of the Youth Committee for that player to represent the club, after the process set out in the School Release Protocol set out in Appendix B here to has been completed and followed and , in particular ,a player shall not be eligible to play for a club in any year UNLESS: -

(i) By 30 November in that year, the club has obtained the prior permission (or

agreement) of the school in the form set out in Appendix C hereto (“the request/nomination form”) AND the club has submitted the copy of the completed request/nomination form to the Youth Committee by 30 November.

- (ii) the player is registered with the club pursuant to (a) and (b) above; and
 - (iii) The Branch Rugby Development Officer has performed all relevant eligibility checks AND the Youth Committee has approved in writing the player playing rugby for the club, subject to and in accordance with the provisions of Appendix B hereto.
 - (iv) School players must be registered with the School for the Youth Committee to consider double registration, and the Youth Committee will also consider lack of team sheets submitted by the School. The Youth Committee will inform Age Grade Committee; if they think school is not providing the opportunity to play sufficient fixtures.
- (b) For the avoidance of doubt, a request/nomination form obtained pursuant to (a) above remains valid for that season only.

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U18 competitions. Any player who has participated in 5 or more All-Ireland League match (AIL) is not eligible to play in Ulster Youth League or Cup Competition. Participation means being listed on match day team sheet either as a starter or substitute.

- 4

(a) The Transfer of a Youth Player from one club to another shall be approved in writing by the Youth Committee, who, in particular, shall take into account these guidelines when approving any such transfer, namely:-

- (i) Where a player’s family moves home, he may apply to transfer to a club nearer to his new home within 12 months of any such change of address.
- (ii) Where a player has not played any competitive game in the previous two seasons.
- (iii) If the player’s club is not fielding a team, at the player’s age group (If transfer is approved, it will be for “one season” only; and the player will be returned automatically to his original club at the end of that season).

(b) Transfer applications must be made between 15 May and 30 November each season

(c) Applications must be made to the Youth Committee via the Competitions Secretary using the relevant form, provided for this purpose.

- (d) After consideration of any such application by the Youth Committee, the Competitions Secretary shall notify both clubs in writing, by email, of the decision of the Youth Committee and request the Branch Rugby Development Officer to complete the transfer on SportsLoMo.

10. AGE THRESHOLD

- (a) The Youth Competitions shall be organized at U14, U16 and U18 age levels.
- (b) The age threshold for the Youth Competitions shall be the age of the player on the 1st July of the season in which the competition is played.
- (c) A player eligible to play at: -
- (i) U14 level, is also eligible to play at U15 level;
 - (ii) U16 level, is also eligible to play at U17 level;
 - (iii) U18 level, is also eligible to play at U19 level.
- (d) Where a player is deemed capable of playing Youth Rugby at a level above which he is eligible to play, as set out under the provisions of (b) and (c) above, the club should apply to the Competitions Secretary, on the form, set out in Appendix D hereto, for approval to play at the higher level. The Request must be supported with written evidence from relevant Branch Personnel in Ulster Branch Player Pathway. If approved such player shall, subject to the provisions of (e) below, play at that level for the remainder of the season.
- (e) A player who is approved to play at a higher level pursuant to the provisions of (d) above, and who is part of the Player Elite Programme, may, where their club does not have a game at the higher level, be reinstated to play at the lower level in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 12(b) below.

11. TIME GAP BETWEEN MATCHES

No player is allowed to appear on more than one team sheet in a 36 Hour period.

12. REINSTATEMENTS

- (a) Youth reinstatements shall adopt, in so far as appropriate, Regulation 10 of the Ulster Branch Adult Male League and Cup Competitions.
- (b) The Youth Committee shall have the power to reinstate a player who: -
- (i) has become disqualified by virtue of the provisions of (a) above, or
 - (ii) falls within the provisions of Regulation 10 (e) above provided that

application is made in writing to the Branch on the relevant form provided for this purpose, and such form is received by the Branch by 10.00 am three working days before the match in which the player seeks to play.

- (c) A player who is eligible to play both at U18 level and, on attaining the age of 18, at adult level, does not require to be reinstated between adult and U18 levels, *with the exception of circumstances relating to Regulation 9 (e) above.*

13. 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:

- (a) in the case of a League match, will have three points deducted off their League total to date for every team sheet that the unqualified player appeared on, and may at the discretion of the Youth Committee, be excluded from the League for the remainder of the season; and
- (b) in the case of a Trophy match, will be debarred from the Trophy competition that season.

14. NUMBER OF PLAYERS AND REPLACEMENT AND SUBSTITUTION OF PLAYERS

- (a) A team must comply with Law 3 of the Game in respect of the nomination and replacement/substitution of players.

- (b) Subject to (a) above, the following provisions shall apply:
 - (i) All teams may nominate up to 22 players of whom up to 7 may play as substitutes or replacements.
 - (ii) Rolling substitutions will be allowed for all matches, from within the above defined match day squad. This is in line with the Branch "Fair Game" initiative.
 - (iii) A team may play a Provincial game with fewer than 15, but not less than 12 players, provided however that the scrums are equally matched at all time. If a team drops temporarily below 12 players due to a yellow card, the game can still continue as a valid game.
 - (iv) Where, during the course of a Provincial League game, a team is reduced below the minimum Of 12 players but, notwithstanding the provisions above, is unable to continue, the opposing team shall be awarded the fixture and receive 3 points, and the team in default shall receive 1 point.
 - (v) Where a team in a League fixture has less than the minimum permitted players pursuant to the provisions of (iv) above, the fixture may be played as a friendly, provided that the forwards from both teams are deployed as necessary between them to ensure that scrums are equally matched at all times.

(vi) A team with players available over and above the number of players taking the field shall be permitted to substitute its remaining players during Regional fixtures and games declared as friendlies.

(vii) Where a team loses a player to injury during a Regional game, and no substitute is available the other team shall withdraw a player to the intent that both teams continue to play with equal numbers.

(viii) In the circumstances set out in (iii) and (v) above, where one team has the permitted number of players that team shall receive 3 points, and the team with less than the minimum permitted players shall receive 1 point;

(ix) where both teams have less than the minimum permitted players both teams shall receive 1 point;

(x) and a team with less than the minimum permitted players shall be deemed to have fulfilled the fixture and shall not be subject to a deduction of 1 point under the provisions of Regulation 6(a) above.

- (c) With a squad size of 15, teams must have a starting front row; with a squad size of 16, 17, 18 must have 4 front row (but be able to replace either Prop or Hooker), and with a squad size of 19, 20, 21 or 22 must have 5 front row (both Prop and Hooker). Where, during the course of a League or Trophy game, uncontested scrums are ordered because no suitably trained front row cover is available after exhausting the provisions above, the result of the game will stand as if uncontested scrums had not been ordered.
- (d) Where a team does not have suitably trained front row players at the start of a game, such that contested scrums cannot take place:
- (i) in the case of a League game, the opposing team shall receive 3 points, and the team in default shall receive 1 point;
 - (ii) in the case of a Trophy game, the team in default shall forfeit the fixture.

15. RE-ARRANGEMENT OF MATCHES

- (a) When the date and time of any match has been arranged by the Youth Committee in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 3(a) above, such date and time shall not be changed other than in the circumstances provided for in Regulation 3(b) above or Regulation 20 below, unless required by, or with the approval of, the Youth Committee or the Competitions Co Ordinators pursuant to the provisions of these Regulations, and any club or clubs contravening this provision shall be deemed to have lost the match.
- (b) Where a club has two or more players committed to national or provincial representative duty within 48 hours prior to or following a scheduled League or Trophy fixture, such club may seek the agreement of the opposing club, and the approval of the Competitions Co-Ordinators, to re-arrange such fixture on a date as near as possible to the scheduled date.
- (c) Where, pursuant to the provisions of Regulation 20 below, a ground is adjudged unfit for play, the home club shall advise the opposing club accordingly, and the opposing club shall have the option, where practicable, of hosting such fixture on

the scheduled date.

- (d) Where the opposing club is unable to exercise, the option referred to at (c) above, the fixture shall be re-arranged at the original venue on a date as near as possible to the original date, provided however that if, pursuant to the provisions of Regulation 20 below, the ground is again adjudged unfit for play the home club shall concede home advantage to the opposing club.

16. NOTICE OF POSTPONEMENT OR CANCELLATION OF MATCHES

- (a) Any club postponing or cancelling a match for any reason must immediately notify:
 - (i) The Youth Representative of the opposing club;
 - (ii) The Branch in writing, or by email, and the Branch will notify the referee if the postponement or cancellation is more than 24 hours before kick-off;
 - (iii) The referee, if the postponement or cancellation is within 24 hours of kick-off;
 - (iv) The Competitions Co-Ordinators.
- (b) Any club failing to comply with the provisions of (a) above may, at the discretion of the Youth Committee, be held liable to pay the travelling expenses of the visiting club and referee.
- (c) All postponed or cancelled League or Trophy matches must be reported by both clubs on the electronic team sheets submitted to the Branch pursuant to the provisions of Regulation 7(d) above.
- (d) A team that has started its journey to the fixture and the home team calls the fixture off due to unplayable pitches, that fixture will be reversed when rescheduled
- (e) In the case of a postponement, and where both clubs can agree a mutually acceptable date to play the match, they shall refer such date to the Competitions Co-Ordinators for approval, provided however that if: -
 - (i) there is no such referral within 96 hours of the scheduled kick-off of the postponed match, and
 - (ii) there is no indication on the electronic team sheets that agreement cannot be reached on re-arrangement as provided in (f) below, the Competitions Co-Ordinators shall determine the date on which the match shall be played.
- (f) In the case of cancellation, the club responsible for the cancellation shall confirm forfeiture of the match on the electronic team sheet.
- (g) Where agreement cannot be reached on re-arrangement or forfeiture as provided respectively in (d) and (e) above, both clubs should indicate accordingly on the electronic team sheets, and the matter will stand referred to the Youth Committee for decision. The club responsible for the postponement or cancellation must immediately inform the Youth Committee of the reasons why they failed to fulfil the fixture and why the Youth Committee should not award the fixture to the opposing side.

17. ORDER OF CANCELLATION

- (a) Matches in the Youth Competitions shall take precedence over any other Youth matches.
- (b) When, on any date, a club cannot fulfil a scheduled League or Trophy fixture at a particular age level it shall proceed, notwithstanding, with its League or Trophy fixtures scheduled at other age levels.

18. REFUSAL TO PLAY

- (a) League and Trophy matches must be completed by the date originally arranged by the Youth Committee in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 3(a) above, or as subsequently rearranged with the approval of the Competitions Co Ordinators.
- (b) In the event of a club failing to play off a match or replay on the stipulated date, it shall be adjudged to have lost the match unless the Youth Committee considers there was a reasonable and proper cause for the refusal, and if the match is a Trophy match it shall additionally be liable to a fine of £100.

19. COMMUNICATIONS OR PROTESTS

- (a) Save as provided in (b) below: -
 - (i) any communication from a club to the Competitions Co-Ordinators under these Regulations regarding the postponement or re-arrangement of a fixture, a change to the starting-time or venue of a match, or match-day arrangements generally, shall be made by the coach or Youth Representative of the club; and
 - (ii) any other communication from a club under these Regulations shall be made to the Competitions Secretary by the Youth Representative of the club.
- (b) A club wishing to make an official protest to the Youth Committee in relation to a fixture must do so in writing on club headed note-paper signed by the Honorary Secretary, or a senior officer, of the club, to reach the Competitions Secretary within 96 hours after the end of the match to which it relates.
- (c) If any Club cannot comply with the registration card and team sheet checks, then their opposition should notify the Competitions Co-Ordinators at the earliest opportunity.
- (d) For the Youth Committee to consider an eligibility of player protest from a Club all registration cards and team sheets checks must have been completed on the day by the team wishing to make a protest.

20. 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 Trophy 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.

21. TROPHY OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

- (a) The Trustees of the Branch for the time being shall be for all intents and purposes the legal owners of all cups and shields in trust for the Branch.
- (b) Cups and shields shall be presented to the winning clubs at the final, or conclusion, of the competition where practicable. Clubs winning a cup or shield must ensure their safe custody and care and return it to the Branch when directed. For the avoidance of doubt, any engraving of any such cup or shield is the responsibility of the Club and not the Branch.

22. DECISIONS OF THE YOUTH COMMITTEE

- (a) A club seeking to dispute any decision of the Youth Committee shall send its appeal, and the grounds thereof, 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 Age Grade Committee at least 24 hours before its regular monthly meeting.
- (b) Where reference to the next regular monthly meeting of the Age Grade 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 Youth Committee 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.

23. LAWS OF THE GAMES VARIATIONS

The laws of the Game, together with any variations to the laws promulgated by the Irish Rugby Football Union, or by the Branch, apply to all age-grade rugby. There are a number of promulgated variations to the Laws specifically for age-grade rugby. These are mainly aimed at the safety of the players, and it is therefore particularly important, therefore, that these variations are applied and enforced by the Clubs.

24. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Irish Rugby Football Union Safeguarding Policy("the Safeguarding Policy") sets out the ethos of the game insofar as Youth Rugby is concerned. Clubs must sign up to the

Safeguarding Policy and ensure that all persons involved with Youth Rugby are fully familiar and conversant with it.

SECTION 2 – YOUTH COMPETITIONS

25. ULSTER YOUTH LEAGUE

- (a) The Ulster Youth League shall be called “Ulster Youth League” .
- (b) For emerging or re-emerging teams there will be Regional Youth Games
- (c) The composition of League Sections will be determined by the Competition Co-Ordinators based on team numbers, previous performance and geography.
- (d) Two or more clubs may join together to field a team, subject to the approval of the Youth Committee at the time of application by such team for entry into the League. The team must not use a pseudonym, but a name which contains the registered club names of all the clubs combining for the competition.
- (e) The following provisions shall apply to the League:
 - (i) A club shall participate at each grade level in the Section in which it competes:
 - (ii) There shall be no promotion or relegation between the Sections. Primary allocation (based on the rating system), shall be decided by the Competitions Co- Ordinators. And then confirmed by the Youth Committee.
 - (iii) The winner and runner-up of each of the Provincial League Sections at each age grade level shall progress through to the Ulster Youth League Play Offs to decide the winner of the Provincial League.

26. TROPHY COMPETITIONS

- (a) The following Trophy competitions (herein collectively called “the Trophy Competitions”) shall be competed for annually and shall, subject to the provisions of (b) below, be open to clubs participating at the relevant age grade level: Ulster U18 (CE Bowman) Cup, Ulster U18 (Mildred Holland) Plate, Ulster U16 (RB Fleming) Cup, Ulster U16 Plate, Billy Latimer Memorial Cup and U14 Plate Ulster U18 Bowl, Ulster U18 Shield, Ulster U16 Bowl, Ulster U16 Shield, Ulster U14 Bowl and U14 Shield.
- (b) A club that does not enter the League, or withdraws from the League, shall not be eligible to compete in the Trophy Competitions, provided however that the Youth Committee may, on application in writing to the Competitions Secretary, agree in exceptional circumstances to waive this provision and be entered in the Shield Competition.

27. OTHER COMPETITIONS

A club shall not organize any rugby competitions, other than the competitions referred to in A and B above, without the prior approval in writing of the Youth Committee.

Appendix A

EXPLANATORY NOTE

There are two quite separate “pathways” to the adult game. One is for players attending a school that participates in the Schools of Ireland Scheme (“Schools rugby”), and the other is for players not attending a school that participates in that Scheme (“Youth rugby”). As a general principle a player is not permitted to move from one pathway to the other and play Schools rugby and Youth rugby in the same season.

The above arrangement is designed to protect the interests of players in both pathways, including the interest of the club player who, for example, plays all season for his club and might otherwise be replaced in the later stages of the Youth Trophy competitions by a school player becoming available because his school has been knocked out of their cup competition.

However, under the terms of the Framework Agreement below, provision has been made for a School/Club partnership (“the partnership”) to ensure that all Age Grade players have the opportunity to play a minimum of 16 meaningful games of rugby in a season for either School, Club or a combination of both.

Framework Agreement between Schools and Clubs regarding Player Release

For the purposes of this agreement the following definitions shall apply;

Regular Rugby Team: A ‘regular’ team is defined as a team scheduled to play 8 or more games prior to Christmas in the coming season, where 5 or more games are scheduled to be played on a Saturday.

Occasional Rugby Team: An ‘occasional’ team is a team defined as a team scheduled to play 7 or less games prior to Christmas in the coming season, or less than 5 games scheduled to be played on a Saturday.

The partnership will facilitate access to rugby for a player who does not play for a ‘regular rugby team’ at School. It is not the intention for this player to be ‘withdrawn’ from rugby in his School, and it would be expected that the student would continue to train and play in School where opportunity permits.

At the start of each season school players (with parental approval) can nominate their chosen club by completing the attached request/nomination form. This form should be countersigned by the School Principal and ratified by the Youth Committee (formerly the Youth Competition Committee). The Youth Committee may deny the request if they feel that the release of the player may threaten the playing opportunity of those players who currently play at the nominated club.

Nomination forms should be completed no later than 30th November and must be approved by the Youth Committee in advance of the player appearing in a League/Trophy fixture. Under exceptional circumstances, the Youth Committee may accept a nomination form beyond this date, if a lack of playing opportunity can be demonstrated.

A player who does not complete a nomination form cannot play for a club. Players who wish to change their nominated club during any season, will be subject to the same process as any other player bound by the Youth Regulations.

Under this partnership, it would be expected that such a player would continue to engage in school rugby training and would make themselves available to turn out for an 'occasional rugby team' or where school games are under threat due to lack of numbers. Club & School should agree in advance, and monitor, the training and playing schedule of the player in question to ensure that all parties are aware of expectations. Central to this agreement is the welfare of the individual, to ensure they are not being over-loaded.

Schools have the right to recall the player at any time, eg to cover injury. Every attempt should be made to avoid a clash of fixtures, however, in such circumstances primacy should be given to the school, and the player would be expected to willingly participate. A School should endeavour to give one week's notice to the Club if the player is likely to be called upon to fulfil an additional fixture.

School players are only permitted to play for age-appropriate Club teams as set out in these Regulations e.g. year 8's cannot play for under 14's, Year 12's must play under 16 rugby rather than U18.

The Club should report any declared injuries to the school on the next school day following a match. Likewise, the School should inform the Club of any injuries prior to the Club's next scheduled training session.

In the event of suspected concussion, there **MUST** be communication between Club and School at the earliest opportunity, to ensure the player is not exposed to further risk.

The Club and School should hold regular reviews, to track the progress of the player and discuss any issues that have arisen. Any disputes arising under this Agreement shall be dealt with in the first instance by the Age Grade Committee, with a right of appeal to the Branch Committee

At all times the welfare of the player is to be the paramount concern of the School and the Club *This Agreement will be reviewed annually through the Rugby Committee.*

APPENDIX B

School Release Policy

“The Guiding principle of Age Grade Rugby in Ulster is that all regulations are player centred, with particular emphasis that all players are entitled to have access to regular rugby”.

Ulster Rugby undertook an independent review of age grade rugby in 2018, where recommendation 4 related to Double Registration between Club and School: *“Introduce promote and proactively manage a form of double registration of boys between school and their chosen club – particularly to ensure players get ‘meaningful rugby per season’, namely 16/20 games.”*

The purpose therefore of the School/Club Partnership Agreement is to ensure that all Age Grade Players have the opportunity to play a minimum of 16 meaningful games of rugby in a season for either School, Club or a combination of both.

The Partnership Agreement will facilitate access to rugby for a player who does not play for a regular rugby team at his school. It is not the intention for this player to be withdrawn from rugby in his school (and it would be expected that the student would continue to train and play in school where the opportunity permits). It is not the intention that a school player would prevent access to regular rugby for an existing club player nor the integrity of Club competitions would be compromised.

The process of using the Partnership Agreement to facilitate regular rugby should be subject to ongoing review through the season and should take into account current season school fixture lists and actual matches played as the season progresses.

School Player Release - Assessment Process

The process develops the decision as a result of balancing the ACCESS of the School player in question against the direct IMPACT on existing Club participants. The process will safeguard against scenarios where SOI players are already adequately provided for within that stream. That is regular 1st, 2nd XV or A & B team players from Tiers 1 & 2 schools who WILL NOT be permitted to play in the Club Youth stream – where their presence may impact on Club players’ opportunity to play, or on the integrity of competitive fixture outcomes.

Applications will ONLY be considered in line with existing regulation – where a principal’s signature is provided as declaration that the player cannot access ‘Regular Rugby’ through existing school provision.

Process Steps:

1. Youth Committee receive application for consideration. The player must be registered with the school and if approved registered with club. Application is referred to Branch Rugby Development Officer for investigation. Player must be registered with the School, and if approved for release, Registered with Club – Double Registration.
2. Player history should be consulted to analyse the players previous years involvement. Has the player in question appeared 'regularly' on 1sts, 2nds / As, Bs team-sheets? How many games did he play? It is therefore vital Schools complete accurate and timely team-sheets in order that all players get the maximum opportunity to play.
3. The school responsible for the release should be contacted as a 2nd step verification that the player has been granted release based on the inability of the school to provide adequate access to the games, i.e. Does the player have access to 8 games prior to Christmas? Also, the School master can provide more nuanced details regarding the playing status of the individual – e.g. Isn't likely to play 'often' for the 1sts and we don't know how many games the 2nds will play?
4. The Club involved in the 'release' should be analysed in relation to current squad sizes and playing data already available for the season. A reasonable judgement call is then necessary to ascertain the potential impact on existing club participants. If required, in borderline decisions, we can analyse the club's team-sheet data to ascertain participating numbers week on week. Are they regularly fielding below 15, around 15, more than 15, a full squad. We can analyse 'selection' behaviour to assess the risk on any existing players.
5. If the steps above are observed to verify that the player does not have access to 'regular' rugby in the schools' environment, that the release does not create cause for concern that a Club player may lose access to the game as an impact by-product, and that there are no other pertinent issues that need to be considered i.e. compromise the integrity of Youth Competitions, the release can be signed off by Youth Committee.

APPENDIX C

Request/Nomination Form for a Schools Player to Play for a Club (Double Registration)

Before the 30 November to be signed AND submitted by the Club to the Youth Committee .This Form ,duly completed, remains valid for this season only .

I the parent/guardian of _____ IRFU. Registration No _____ do request that you as the Principal of _____(School) consider releasing the player to play rugby for _____(Club) in the Ulster Branch Youth League and Trophy Competitions.

Such a step would not preclude the player from continuing to play at School, as and when School fixtures are scheduled.

I _____Principal of the above school have read the Explanatory Note and Framework Agreement overleaf, and confirmed with the Master in Charge of Rugby that _____(Player name) is unlikely to have the opportunity to play 16 – 20 school games over the course of the school year. Therefore, I am content to approve this request.

Signature: _____(Parent/Guardian) Date: _

Signature: _____(Principal) Date: _

Signature: _____(Youth Convenor) Date: _

Signature: _____(YCC) Date: _____

Date Received at Branch office (see below). _____ Initial _____

APPENDIX D



IRISH RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Who should complete this form?

Age Grade players can play in two age categories. For example, the category a player is eligible for and one category up e.g. U15 playing at U16.

Any individual player identified to play 3 age categories e.g. U16 to U18 or U17 to U19, must provide the written consent of:

1. Parents/ Guardians
2. School Principal/Club Welfare Officer
3. Club Youth Coordinator/Games-master

Permission may be granted if there is not a negative impact on the club or school fielding a team at the players own age bracket. I.e. if an U16 plays up, the U16 teams' ability to field is not impacted.

First Name Last Name

Address

Date of Birth IRFU ID

Club/School

Home Phone (Parent/Guardian)

Mobile Phone (Parent/Guardian)

Email (Parent/Guardian)

Years Playing Experience (if applicable)

Please state club's/school's reason/s for seeking permission for above player to play in an older age category:

Parent/Guardian Consent (please fill-in appropriate sections)

I (parent/guardian) give consent for (player)

to participate at the Older Age Category. I am aware of the IRFU Regulation Variations for age grade rugby. I am aware that my daughter/son may be playing with/against players 2+ years older. I note the scrum guidelines relating to front row players.

Signature: _____ Date:

Relationship to player: