

## REGULATIONS FOR THE WOMEN'S PYRAMID LEAGUE SYSTEM EFFECTIVE FOR SEASON 2021-22

### Definition

In these Regulations, the following words and expressions have the following meaning:-

<b>Area Association:</b>	Any regional football association defined pursuant to Rule 11.1.2.
<b>Area Association Level:</b>	Tiers 3 and below of the Women's Pyramid League System.
<b>Directors:</b>	The body comprising the board of directors of the Association (including its committees and sub-committees) as constituted under the articles of association of the Association current from time to time."
<b>FAW:</b>	Football Association of Wales Limited.
<b>Football Related Liabilities:</b>	Shall have the meaning defined in the Preamble to the Rules.
<b>Ground Criteria:</b>	Shall mean the WPWL Club Licensing Regulations or the Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations, or the respective League Ground Criteria, as the case may be.
<b>National League:</b>	Any women's league defined pursuant to Rule 11.1.3. National Level: Tier 1 of the Women's Pyramid League System.
<b>Playing Season:</b>	Shall have the meaning defined in the Preamble to the Rules.
<b>Play-Off Match:</b>	The match played in accordance with 3(f)(ii) of these Regulations.
<b>Pyramid League System:</b>	The pyramid league system for the playing of competitive league women's football in Wales at various levels ("Tiers"), as approved by the FAW from time to time.
<b>Qualifying Club:</b>	Any club, being a full Member of the FAW, defined pursuant to Rule 11.1.1.
<b>Regional Level:</b>	Tier 2 of the Pyramid League System.
<b>Rules:</b>	The rules of the FAW as passed by the Members of the FAW from time to time.
<b>Tier 1:</b>	The Welsh Premier Women's League comprising Qualifying Clubs who have obtained the licence pursuant to the WPWL Club Licensing Regulations playing at National Level, aspiring to play in European football. The League is administered by the FAW.
<b>Tier 2:</b>	Two divisions comprising Area Association clubs playing at Regional Level, aspiring to play at Tier 1 level. The divisions are administered by one or more League(s) supported by the FAW.
<b>Tier 3 and below:</b>	Divisions comprising Area Association clubs, playing at Area Association level. The divisions are administered by one or more League(s) on behalf of the Area Association, in which it is geographically located. A League which only permits clubs from one Area Association, must be playing at Tier 3 or below
<b>Welsh Premier Women's League:</b>	Means the premier league (Tier 1), being the top division in the Pyramid League System, for the playing of association football by women in Wales.

**WPWL Club Licensing Regulations:** The quality standards and procedures set by the FAW from time to time to which all existing members of the Welsh Premier Women's League and those seeking promotion to the Welsh Premier Women's League must adhere.

1. Responsibilities and Objectives

- (a) The Pyramid League System provides football clubs throughout Wales with a framework of competitive women's football appropriate to their playing standards, ground facilities, geographical location, club structure and economic means and permits the seasonal promotion, relegation or lateral movement of clubs between the Tiers and the divisions of the Tiers in an orderly manner.
- (b) The FAW has responsibility for Pyramid Tier 1 which form the National Leagues in the Pyramid League System. The FAW has responsibility for Pyramid Tier 2 and the divisions are administered by one or more League(s) with support of the FAW. The Area Associations have responsibility for those leagues in the Pyramid League System at Tier 3 and below.
- (c) Except where otherwise stated, these Regulations apply to all Tiers in the Women's Pyramid League System.

2. League Structure

- (a) All Tiers of the Women's Pyramid League System shall be determined by the FAW. Each League (and its divisions in Tiers 3 and below) will be placed at a given Tier in the system, with the Welsh Premier Women's League at the head.
- (b) No League or Area Association shall incorporate any changes in the structure of any part of the Pyramid League System except at the direction, and with the approval, of the FAW.
- (c) The FAW will control these Regulations. No League in the Pyramid League System shall change the number of its divisions or number of teams playing in a division without the written permission of the FAW.
- (d) Divisions in the Pyramid League System shall contain no more than 12 teams, unless with the written permission of the FAW.
- (e) Every League in the Pyramid League System shall conform with the decisions of the FAW as laid down from time to time.
- (f) All clubs in the Welsh Premier Women's League must hold a current annual Tier 1 Licence under the WPWL Club Licensing Regulations to play in the Welsh Premier Women's League. Any club playing in the Welsh Premier Women's League that fails to obtain renewal of its licence for the next season shall be relegated one Tier from the Welsh Premier Women's League at the end of the season in which the unsuccessful application was made.
- (g) All Tier 2 clubs must satisfy Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations to play in Tier 2. Any club playing Tier 2 that fails to satisfy Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations for the next season shall be relegated one Tier to Tier 3 at the end of the season in which the unsuccessful application was made.

3. Promotion / Relegation

- (a) Save where the FAW otherwise directs under Regulation 3(g), there shall be automatic promotion and relegation between the Tiers of the Pyramid League System, provided the promoted club meets the necessary Ground Criteria. A club will not be promoted if it is not successful in its application.
- (b) No Tier 2 League or Area Association will be allowed to operate a Ground Criteria for promotion which is more stringent than the level of the Pyramid they feed into.
- (c) The Ground Criteria application process shall be as follows:-
  - (i) Clubs must apply to the FAW in writing as per the WPWL Club Licensing Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the criteria in the WPWL Club Licensing Regulations for playing in the Welsh Premier Women's League;
  - (ii) clubs must apply to the relevant Tier 2 League in writing as per the Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the criteria in the FAW Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations for playing in Tier 2; and
  - (iii) clubs must apply to the relevant League to which they wish to be promoted into, if they wish to be assessed against the Tier 3 Ground Criteria for playing in Tier 3.
- (d) A club in any division of the Pyramid League System that applies for and meets the relevant Ground Criteria and achieves a promotional place in its division of a Tier must take up the promotion to the higher Tier in the next Playing Season.
- (e) No reserve team shall be permitted to play in the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 2, except in a dedicated reserves or development division which operates outside of the Pyramid League System.
- (f) Subject to the overriding provisions of Regulations 2(d), 2(f), and 2(g) and the FAW's right to prescribe the number of clubs to be promoted and relegated within the Pyramid League System under Regulation 3(g), promotion and relegation at the end of the Playing Season shall be as follows:-
  - i. between Tiers 1 and 2 – the club finishing the bottom one place of the Welsh Premier Women's League shall be relegated to the Tier 2 League and placed by the FAW (using its power under Regulation 3(g)) in the most geographically appropriate division of the Tier 2 League. This club will be replaced by the winner of a Play-Off Match involving clubs finishing in first position in each of the divisions of the Tier 2 Leagues but where a club finishing in first position does not meet the Tier 1 Welsh Premier Women's League Club Licensing Regulations the club finishing in second position in that division shall participate in the Play-Off Match provided it meets the Welsh Premier Women's League Club Licensing Regulations; and
  - ii. There will be one Play-Off Match featuring those two clubs arranged at the absolute discretion of the FAW. Each match will be played over a single leg and staged at a neutral ground selected and organised by the FAW; and
  - iii. in the event of the scores being level at the end of 90 minutes play, extra time will be played in two equal periods of 15 minutes. The team which has scored the most goals will be declared the winner at the end of the two periods of extra time. If the tie is still undecided after extra time the winners will be determined by the taking of Kicks from the Penalty Mark in accordance with the International Board Decision in the Laws of the Game; and

between Tiers 2 and 3:-

- a. the clubs finishing in the bottom two places of each of the two divisions in the Tier 2 Leagues will be relegated to a division of Tier 3 and placed in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 3 by the FAW using its power under Regulation 3(g);
  - b. clubs finishing in first position in each of the divisions of Tier 3 shall be promoted to Tier 2 but where there are more than two eligible clubs, Play-Off Matches must be arranged by the Tier 2 League concerned. Where a club finishing in first position does not meet the Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations the club finishing in second position in that division shall be promoted or participate in the Play-Off Matches, provided it meets the Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations; and
- iii. between Tiers 3 and 4:-
  - a. The promotion and relegation of Tiers 3 and 4 is the responsibility of the relevant Area Association and must be based on sporting merit and compliance with any relevant Ground Criteria.
- (g) The number of clubs promoted to a Tier must equate to the number of clubs relegated from the Tier, unless this would result in a League having more than 12 or less than 6 teams in the next Playing Season. In such circumstances, the FAW may consider:-
  - i. reducing the number of clubs relegated from the higher Tier;
  - ii. increasing the number of clubs relegated from the lower Tier;
  - iii. increasing or decreasing the number of clubs promoted into or out of any Tier; or
  - iv. placing a club promoted or relegated to or from a Tier, or a club in a Tier that has not been promoted or relegated, in a different division of the relevant Tier to that which it would otherwise be promoted or relegated, or would have remained.
- (h) No league in the Pyramid League System shall promote a club which does not finish as champions, or runners up.
- (i) Tier 2 Leagues must inform both the FAW and the relevant Area Associations by 1<sup>st</sup> February each year of clubs that have made application to be assessed against the Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations and therefore who, if successful, will be eligible to be promoted to Tier 2 of the Pyramid League System at the end of the season, irrespective of league positions at that date.
- (j) All clubs who wish to make an application to be assessed against the relevant Ground Criteria and therefore who, if successful, will be eligible to be promoted to or within the Pyramid Tiers 1 – 3 in the following season must do so in writing to the higher league between the start of the season and 31<sup>st</sup> December. A first ground inspection will be made before 1<sup>st</sup> February to inform clubs what work they are required to do to meet the Ground Criteria but (subject to anything to the contrary in the Tier 1 WPWL Club Licensing Regulations, Tier 2 Club Licensing Regulations or League Ground Criteria, as applicable) they must complete all work to comply in full with the Ground Criteria of the higher League by 31<sup>st</sup> March for the Welsh Premier Women's League or by 30<sup>th</sup> April in all other leagues, to be eligible for promotion. Under no circumstances will a club be promoted if they do not meet the Ground Criteria by the 30<sup>th</sup> April deadline. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines contained or referred to in this sub-clause of the Regulations.
- (k) Any club proposing ground sharing arrangements for matches in the next season in the Pyramid League System must ensure written confirmation is provided to the appropriate league by 1<sup>st</sup> April. This arrangement must satisfy the league concerned and must be for a minimum of one season. Any club entering into a ground sharing arrangement for one season and being promoted on this basis,

will automatically be relegated after one season if they are unable to continue the arrangement and are unable to confirm their facilities for the following season by 1st April. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines in this sub-clause of the Regulations.

- (l) The inspection of clubs' facilities for matches in the Welsh Premier Women's League shall be the responsibility of the FAW as per the WPWL Club Licensing Regulations. The inspection of clubs' facilities for matches in Tiers 2 and 3 shall be the responsibility of the relevant league as per the Tier 2 Women's Club Licensing Regulations and Tier 3 Ground Criteria respectively. The FAW shall be solely responsible for determining whether the applicant complies with the Ground Criteria of the relevant National League. All applicant clubs must pay a ground inspection fee as follows; Tier 1 = £100, Tier 2 = £50, Tier 3 = £50 (if applicable).
- (m) In respect of the Pyramid League System leagues and Area Associations must advise the FAW and each other within seven days of end of the Playing Season of the clubs who, subject to these Regulations, will be relegated or, having satisfied the Ground Criteria, will be eligible for promotion.

#### 4. **The Movement of Clubs within the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 4 other than by Promotion or Relegation**

- (a) Whenever a club applies pursuant to Rule 11.1.1.3 for admission to Membership of the FAW as a Qualifying Club playing in the National League, the following will apply:-
  - i. The application by the club should be submitted as soon as possible and in any event must be received by the Chief Executive of the FAW by 1st June.
  - ii. The application should include details of:-
    - a. the reason for the application;
    - b. the proposed playing name;
    - c. a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Ground Criteria; and
    - d. the management structure of the club.
  - iii. The application will be determined by the Directors in its absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Directors shall have the power to:-
    - a. grant consent as applied for; or
    - b. refuse consent for the applicant club to play in the National League but order the applicant club play in a league at a Tier in the Pyramid League System below the National League; or
    - c. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Council thinks necessary including, without limitation, the playing name of the applicant club or, where there is a strong connection between the applicant club and the club that has, for example, (1) been wound up or (2) is being taken over as a going concern by the applicant club, the Council will have the power to impose a condition requiring the applicant club to make a contribution (in whole or in part in the Council's absolute discretion) to the Football Related Liabilities of the club that has been wound up or is being taken over; or
    - d. refuse the application.

Solely as guidance to any potential applicant under this Regulation 4 (a) that has a strong connection to a club that has been wound up, and without limiting the absolute discretion of the Directors, the FAW will ordinarily expect the applicant club to apply to join the Pyramid

League System either at Tier 3 or two Tiers below the level at which the other (connected) club competed prior to being wound up, whichever is the lower.

(b) If a club ceases to compete in the a League during a season but that club wishes to apply to continue playing in the Pyramid League System in the following season, the following will apply:-

- i. An application by the club should be submitted as soon as possible and in any event must be received by the Chief Executive of the FAW by 1st June.
- ii. The application should include details of:-
  - a. the reason for the application, including the reason the club ceased to compete in the National League;
  - b. a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Ground Criteria; and
  - c. the management structure of the applicant.
- iii. The application will be determined by the Directors in its absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Directors shall have the power to:-
  - a. grant consent as applied for; or
  - b. refuse consent for the Qualifying Club to play in the National League but order the Qualifying Club play in a league at a Tier in the Pyramid League System or
  - c. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Directors thinks necessary including, without limitation, a condition requiring the applicant club to discharge (in whole or in part in the Director's absolute discretion) the Football Related Liabilities of the club before the commencement of the next Playing Season; or
  - d. refuse the application.

Solely as guidance to clubs making an application under this Regulation 4(b) and without limiting the absolute discretion of the Directors, the FAW will ordinarily expect a club to play in Tier 3 of the Pyramid League System or two levels below the level at which it competed prior to ceasing to compete, whichever is the lower.

(c) If two or more Qualifying Clubs or one Qualifying Club and another club or two or more other clubs propose a transaction or series of transactions which result in the merging or consolidation of those two clubs into one club ("the Proposed Merged Club") and wish to apply for consent to play in the Pyramid League System in the following season, the following will apply:-

- i. A joint application by the two clubs must be received by the Chief Executive of the FAW by no later than 1st June.
- ii. The application should include details of:-
  - a. the reason for the application;
  - b. the proposed playing name;
  - c. a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Ground Criteria;
  - d. identification of all Football Related Liabilities;

- e. a declaration that the Proposed Merged Club will adopt and, in the ordinary course of business, discharge all the Football Related Liabilities of the two clubs; and
    - f. a declaration that each applicant club is compliant with the Rules and rules of membership of its relevant National League or Area Association.
  - iii. The application will be determined by the Directors in its absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Directors shall have the power to:-
    - a. grant consent as applied for; or
    - b. grant consent in principle but order the Proposed Merged Club play at a different Tier in the Pyramid League System to that applied for; or
    - c. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Directors thinks necessary including, without limitation, a condition requiring the Proposed Merged Club to discharge (in whole or in part in the Director's absolute discretion) the Football Related Liabilities of both applicant clubs before the commencement of the next Playing Season; or
    - d. refuse the application.
- (d) Any application to fill a vacancy or otherwise compete in the Pyramid League System in any other circumstances (including, without limitation, following incorporation or de-incorporation of a Qualifying Club under Rule 134) shall be determined by the Directors in its absolute discretion. The Council shall only consider an application from a club playing at the immediate Tier below the League to which it applies to join.

APPENDIX 1

# Women's Pyramid as of 2021/22

