

# 20s RUGBY - GUIDANCE



As an impact of the IRFU Ulster Branch, Rugby Committee, *Working Party into Adult Rugby Participation*, it has been proposed, and accepted by Rugby Committee that we **take steps to establish an 'Adult Age Grade' structure as an** introduction to the 2016/17 season.

## Guiding Principles

- Primary & Secondary research conducted by the working party identified the following factors as key in the recruitment of young players;
  - Opportunity to play alongside peers
  - Quality coaching environment
  - Good social environment
- **The ethos of the 'Adult age grade' structure should be focused on participation** rather than performance, i.e. Players who are likely to feature for 1<sup>st</sup> XV in the coming season (especially at Senior Clubs), are not necessarily the focus of this structure.

Clubs are encouraged to participate on the basis that this represents an environment that appeals to Young Adult Players. (In the 16/17 season, there will be no **'competition structure' to win.**)

The intention is to **give ourselves a better opportunity to recruit 'new' players, retain current young players and attract 'lapsed' School/Youth players back in to club structures for the coming season.**

- This structure will allow for flexibility in fielding 15 players.

While it is the intention that all competing clubs field a team of U20 players, it may be necessary for clubs to include players up to the age of 23 in order to field a full complement.

**When selecting these 'overage players', it is key that Clubs' buy into the stated ethos of the structure.** (i.e. It may not be in keeping with the intention of the structure to field overage players who have been involved in the **'performance'** end of the club, especially in Senior clubs).

- Evidence gathered by the working party (surveys & research) suggests that it is imperative that the club provide a quality coaching resource to engage these players. Credible role models are shown to be key in making this type of programme successful.

### Structure

The 2016/17 season will be used as a pilot to assess the potential of such a Programme, with a view to establishing a more formal network in future seasons – if the programme is shown to work.

1. Current Plans would **be to collect 'entries' from Clubs in May/June.**
2. Branch Regional Staff team to oversee allocation of Friendly fixtures. We would hope to announce these back to competing clubs before end of June.
3. Fixtures to take place in August/September, prior to the commencement of the regular league season. (3/4 fixture MAX)
4. Competing clubs will take responsibility for arranging the specific date of each fixture **in collaboration with opposition. (There will be no 'on or before' date, and no pre-determined default as to what 'day of the week' the games will take place).**
5. **These fixtures will be treated as 'scratch' fixtures, to be authorised by the Honorary Secretary of the IRFU Ulster Branch** – therefore no additional team insurance will be necessary for the small number of games in the programme.
6. Team-sheets will be mandatory, to be collected from participating teams.

### Club Engagement

The IRFU and Ulster Branch have engaged with stakeholders across Ireland & Ulster in the last year/18 months, and has heard, loud and clear, the concern and fears of our constituent Clubs around the transition of players from Age grade structures through to Adult rugby.

This programme is a first step in trying to help clubs to address this issue, and provide a meaningful vehicle to encourage young players to buy in to our game.

Young people have told us that this is an environment they would like to be provided (backed up by external research), however, in order to make it a real success it is vital that **clubs 'buy in' to the guiding principles established by the Rugby Committee.**

### Refereeing Principles

Referees are critical to the success of this exciting new opportunity to develop rugby in Ulster and are encouraged to help in delivering a positive experience for all participants:

- U19 Scrum law variations to be used as a starting point
- Be flexible on substitutions
- Player safety as always is paramount
- Fully explore advantage opportunities and adopt a clear and obvious approach to penalising
- Playing periods can be discussed with coaches but based on 40 minute halves