



THE WELSH RUGBY UNION NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES 2021-2022

1. Description:

The Competition shall be called:

- i) In respect of the Premier Division, “The Indigo Premiership”; and
- ii) In respect of the Championship, Divisions 1 to 3 and Divisions 1 to 3 North, “The WRU National Leagues”.

2. Interpretation:

For the purposes of these National League Rules, the following terms have the meaning assigned to them:

- **ARTICLES** shall mean the Articles of Association of the Union.
- **CLUB** means a Club that is a member of the Union only and does not include Affiliated Organisations (as defined in the Articles) or any other entity which may be admitted to membership of the Union.
- **DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS** shall mean the disciplinary regulations of the Union for Season 2021-2022
- **DISTRICT MEMBER** shall have the definition given in the Articles.
- **PREMIER DIVISION CRITERIA** shall mean the A Licence criteria for entry into and prerequisite to remaining in the Premier Division, and those Clubs seeking promotion from the Championship as set out in Annexure 1 to these National League Rules.
- **COMPETITIONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** means the Committee appointed by the Board of Directors of the Union in accordance with the Articles which is a Sub Committee of the Community Game Board.
- **UNION** means The Welsh Rugby Union Limited.

All other defined terms shall be interpreted in accordance with the Union’s Memorandum of Association and Articles.

3. Form

The League **comprises** 25 Divisions, which shall be formed as follows:

- | | | |
|------------------|---|----------------|
| Premier Division | - | Up to 12 Clubs |
| Championship | - | 14 Clubs |

<i>Division 1 East</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 East Central</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 West Central</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 West</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 East</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 East Central</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 West Central</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 West</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East A</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East B</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East C</i>	-	<i>11 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East D</i>	-	<i>7 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East Central A</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East Central B</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 East Central C</i>	-	<i>8 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West Central A</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West Central B</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West Central C</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West A</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 3 West B</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 1 North</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs</i>
<i>Division 2 North</i>	-	<i>10 Clubs (to include 1 Second XV Team)</i>
<i>Division 3 North</i>	-	<i>12 Clubs (to include 6 Second XV Teams)</i>

For the avoidance of doubt, subject to paragraph 4 below, Clubs playing in the Division 3 Leagues will be placed by the Union within the relevant Division based on meritocracy and such other considerations as are deemed appropriate in the circumstances (which shall include (but are not limited to) geographical considerations in respect of Division 3 West and the need to ensure that there is a balance in each League regarding the number of participating Clubs). The Union considers that it is optimal for there to be at least 12 Clubs in each Division which will be applied when practical.

In the event that a Club fails to complete any scheduled National League match during the season, the Competitions Management Committee shall consider the same and apply such sanctions in accordance with these National League Rules as it deems appropriate in its absolute discretion. The Competitions Management Committee shall also consider any necessary consequential changes to the National League, as it deems appropriate. Such discretion shall include, but is not limited to, relegating the relevant Club to the lowest Division in the Division 3 League pyramid and expelling them from the National League pyramid. Where a Club has been expelled from the National League, the Competitions Management Committee may promote such other Club(s) from other Division(s) as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.

A Club which fails to complete its League programme and is sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Competitions Management Committee to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with Rule 8i (ii) below.

4. Structure of League for the 2022-2023 Season

The National League structure may be reviewed by the Union during the season in respect of the composition of any Division within the League. It is recognised and accepted the optimum number is

upwards of 12 competing Clubs in a Division which will be applied only in exceptional circumstances. The Union reserves the right to amend the National League structure for the 2022-2023 season following the completion of any such review.

5. Eligibility to Participate

a. Clubs

- (i) The Competition will be restricted to those Clubs who are full members of the Union, RGC1404 (North Wales Development Region) and Clubs which are District Members of the Union, and who conform to the provisions for the time being of the Union's Memorandum of Association and the Articles and which, taking part therein, must be represented by each Club's First XV with the exception of the second XV team in Division 2 North and six second XV teams in Division 3 North.
- (ii) In order to compete in the Premier Division, Clubs must comply with the Premier Division Criteria.
- (iii) In order to compete in leagues below the Premier Division, Clubs and District Members must comply with any licensing requirements promulgated by the Union from time to time.
- (iv) All Clubs have a responsibility to field a minimum of twelve players at the commencement of any National League match.

b. Players

- (i) No player may represent a Club in the National League unless he is a registered or dual registered member of that Club or a permit has been granted for him to play by his parent Club/Regional Team. With the exception of registered players from a Club who has withdrawn from the League. In this instance, the permit may be granted by the Union to play for a Club in the National League.
- (ii) A player has to be registered in Wales with a Club, a Regional Team or Regional Academy, a Development Region and its associated Academy, in addition to the National Academy, and his registration must be notified to the Union before he is eligible to play for a Club in the National League.

All players must be named on the team sheet submitted by the Club to the Match Official prior to the match (see the protocol for matches played in Wales as set out in the Union's Disciplinary Regulations). The Team sheets must also identify the tight head, loose head replacements. In addition, the Team sheets must identify the Head Coach of each team.

- (iii) The team sheet **must** identify any player(s) who is on permit or dual registration together with their parent Club/Regional Team.
- (iv) **It is expected and anticipated that team sheets are submitted electronically via MyWRU no later than 24 hours after the date of any fixture.**
- (v) It is recommended that any player who has suffered a diagnosed concussion shall not participate in any match or training session for a minimum period of 19 days for adults (defined as any player aged 19 years and above as at 1 September of the relevant year) or 23 days for children or adolescents (defined as any player aged below 19 years as at 1 September of the relevant year) All players should be reviewed by a medical practitioner and should not return to training or playing until symptom free and having successfully

completed the WRU graduated return to play programme. It is recommended that declarations of return to fitness to train and play be supported by a written medical practitioner's report. The WRU Concussion Guidance document is available online at wru.wales/medical

- (vi) Clubs are required to complete and sign a Statement of Truth (set out in the Player Transfer and Registration Regulations) in respect of the payment of players on an annual basis, as directed by the Union from time to time.
 - (vii) In relation to Division 2 & 3 North and the Second XV Teams participating in the National League. Other than in exceptional circumstances, any player who has played for the First XV of any Club for a total of 12 times, whether that be in the National League, National Cup, Plate, Bowl or Shield for Division 3 North teams, will be precluded from participating in the Second XV Teams in the National League. For the avoidance of doubt this includes playing on permit.
 - (viii) It is strongly recommended that each club is to have a nominated and qualified or First Aider with up to date with up to date qualifications for each match and training session. Please contact the WRU for more information on St. Johns Ambulance courses should any club be interested.
- 5.1.1 Subject to Rule 5.1.5, Premier Division Clubs and Championship Clubs who have been awarded an A Licence by the Union having met the Premier Division Criteria may have registered up to two non-Welsh qualified players (being players who at the date of registration are not qualified to take the field of play as a member of a team at senior level to represent Wales in accordance with World Rugby Regulation 8.1) who will at any one time be eligible to play for it in the National League (i.e. if one or both non-Welsh qualified player(s) leave the Club he/they may be replaced providing the number of non-Welsh qualified players at that Club does not exceed two). **Only two non-Welsh qualified players may be named in the match day squad for any National League or Cup fixture.** In the case of a professional or semi-professional player from outside the EC and who does not have EC workers' rights, a licence to employ the player must be obtained by the Club from the UK Border Agency. An application for a licence to employ a professional or semi-professional rugby player has to be supported by the Union. The Union will not support an application for a licence to employ a professional or semi-professional rugby player other than an application made by a Professional Region, a Development Region, a Premier Division Club or a Championship Club which has been awarded an A Licence having met the Premier Division Criteria. The numbers of non-Welsh qualified players which may be contracted by a Professional Region is governed by the Rugby Services Agreements between the Union and the Regional Organisations.
- 5.1.2 With the exception of those Championship Clubs that have obtained an A Licence, Clubs in the Championship Division through to Division 3 are not limited to the number of non-Welsh qualified players or overseas players they are allowed to register in their respective squads however each team is only permitted to select a maximum of 2 overseas players in each matchday team (such players must provide documentary evidence to prove they have a right to reside in the UK and Clubs must confirm such players do not receive any material benefit from playing Rugby Union).
- 5.1.3 Subject to Rule 5.1.6, a Championship Club that has obtained an A Licence may have registered up to two non-Welsh qualified players who will at any one time be eligible to play for it in the National League (i.e. if one or both non-Welsh qualified player(s) leave the Club he/they may be replaced providing the number of non-Welsh qualified players at that Club does not exceed two) and Rule 5.1.1 shall apply to any such Championship Club accordingly. **Only two non-Welsh qualified players may be named in the match day squad for any National League or Cup fixture**

- 5.1.4 For the avoidance of doubt, an overseas player is one who is not qualified to play for Wales at the date of registration and who cannot prove to the satisfaction of the Union that he is entitled to the rights granted under Title III of the EC Treaty or under the EEA or other European Agreement (i.e., a person who has European workers' rights). **Rules 5.1.1 – 5.1.4 will remain the same for the duration of the 2021-2022 season, save that the WRU reserves the right to review and amend these rules if necessary.**
- 5.1.5 **Any Premier Division Club** who have more than two non-Welsh qualified players registered will forfeit £15,000 from their Union distribution monies for every additional non-Welsh qualified registered player in the squad and will fail the A Licence Criteria to participate in the Premier Division and in turn will be in breach of the Premier Division Participation Agreement.
- 5.1.6 **Any Championship Club that has obtained an A Licence** who have more than two non-Welsh qualified players registered **will forfeit £2,000** from their Union distribution monies for every additional non-Welsh qualified registered player in the squad and will fail to comply with the Premier Division Criteria and will forfeit its A Licence, resulting in the Club not being eligible for promotion to the Premier Division.
- 5.2. **Clubs in the Premier Division** which run only one senior team will be limited to having up to 32 registered players who will be eligible to play for the Club in National League matches. Clubs in the Premier Division which run two or more senior teams, will be allowed to have more than 32 registered players who will be eligible to play in National League matches.
- 5.3. A Player will be ineligible to play for a Club in any National League fixture if he transfers or is registered after 11:59 pm on 31 January 2022, unless such a player is:
- (i) a player registered with that Club's Youth team, who has attained the age of 18 and is subsequently registered as a senior player with that Club;
 - (ii) a player who is subject to a permanent residential relocation from another area where extensive travel (in excess of 100 miles round trip) precludes the player continuing to play for his former Club (applies to Clubs playing in the Championship that have not been awarded an A Licence and Clubs playing in Divisions 1–3 only). Before such a player may play, the player's registration must be sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee; or
 - (iii) a player not previously registered with any other rugby Club. Before such a player may play, the player's registration must be sanctioned by the Competitions Management Committee.

Player Registration requests must be lodged with the Rugby Operations Department of the Union by 11:59 pm on 31 January 2022, in accordance with the Union's Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

- 5.4. A player who transfers in the period between the end of the previous season and 11:59 pm on 31 January 2022 will be eligible to play for his new Club in National League matches provided that the process has been completed in accordance with the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

5.4 **Player Loan System**

The player loan scheme has now been removed and will not be allowed to be used by any team with the exception of the Regions.

5.5. **Player Permits**

The Player Permit Scheme will operate as follows:

5.5.1 Subject to Rule 5.6.2, in any National League match:

- (i) **With the exception of Clubs in the Premier Division, a Club may play up to a maximum of four players in total on permit in a National League match.**

With the exception of the Premier Division, there will be no more than four non-primary players with a club in the Championship and National League made up of dual registrations, Academy players and permits allowed in a match day squad. For clarity, a non-primary player is a player whose primary registration is held by another Club or entity.

- (ii) **Clubs in the Premier Division may play up to a maximum of 23 players on permit in a National League match.**

- (iii) A player with a Regional Team may only play on permit for a Premier Division Club in a National League match.

- (iv) No overseas players (as defined in Rule 5.1.4) may play on permit unless that player is registered with a Regional Team and then he may only play for a Premier Division Club.

- (v) A player who is registered with a **Regional Academy** may play on permit for a Club in any Division. The permit may be granted only by an authorised representative of the Regional Academy and must be lodged with the Union’s Fixture and Competitions Manager.

- (vi) Permits may be obtained as stipulated in and subject to the restrictions contained in the following table:

Division	Clubs from where permits may be obtained
Premier Division	Regional Teams (no limit) Regional Academy (no limit) Premier Division (no limit) Championship and Divisions 1 to 3 (no limit) District Member clubs (no limit) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 23 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH) Registered Premier Division players will be allowed to permit down into the Championship as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club.
Championship	Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4) Championship (max 4) Divisions 1 to 3 (max 4)* District Member clubs (max 4) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH) *Registered Championship players will be allowed to permit down into Division 1 only as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club

Divisions 1	Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the Club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4) Divisions 1 to 3 (max 4) District Member clubs (max 4) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH) Registered Division 1 players will be allowed to permit down to Division 2 clubs only as well as the club who held their registration immediately before joining their current club
Division 2	Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the Club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4 – limited to the Club who held the previous registration) Divisions 1 to 3 (max 4) District Member clubs (max 4) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH) Registered Division 2 players will be allowed to permit down to Division 3 clubs only.
Division 3	Regional Academy (max 4) Premier Division (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Championship (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Division 1 (max 4 – limited to the club who held the previous registration) Divisions 2 to 3 (max 4) District Member Clubs (max 4)

(vii) A permit must be sought for each match in which a player plays and such permit may be granted for a match at any time during the season subject to the conditions set out in Regulation 7 of the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

(viii) Team sheets submitted to the match official prior to the start of a match must identify players on permit or dual registration and their parent Club/Regional Team. The Team sheets must also identify the tight head, loose head replacements. In addition, the Team sheets must identify the Head Coach of each team.

5.6 Dual Registration scheme

Details of the Dual Registration scheme are set out in Regulation 8 of the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

5.7 Replacements

In the Premier Division up to eight replacements may be named for any National League match provided that, of the 23 named players and replacements, there must be six suitably trained and

experienced players who can play in the front row to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion that a replacement tight-head prop forward and on the first occasion that a replacement loose-head prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

In the Championship, **up to five replacements may be named for any National League match provided that, of the 20 named players and replacements, there must be five suitably trained and experienced players who can play in the front row.** This will include Two Hookers and three (3) prop forwards. The replacement prop must be either a Tight Head or Loose Head or a player capable of playing on both Heads. This will ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required the game can continue safely with contested scrums. If a Tight Head were to be required and a team only has a Loose Head named as a Front Row replacement and he/she is not trained or able to play in that position, then uncontested scrums will be ordered by the referee. Similarly, if a Loose Head were to be required and a team only had a Tight Head named as a Front Row replacement and he/she is not trained or able to play in that position then again uncontested scrums will be ordered by the referee.

If they are available, a team must have three (3) front row players in the front row at all times in an uncontested scrum, only when there is no available front row replacement or substitute is any other player permitted to play in the front row Law 3.15 applies

In Divisions 1 to 3 and Division 1 to 3 North **no more than five replacements may be named. If a Club does name five replacements, there must be five players who are suitably trained and experienced who can play in the front row.** This will include Two Hookers and three (3) prop forwards. The replacement prop MUST be either a Tight Head or Loose Head or a player capable of playing on both Heads. This will ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required the game can continue safely with contested scrums. If a Tight Head were to be required and a team only has a Loose Head named as a Front Row replacement and he/she is not trained or able to play in that position, then uncontested scrums will be ordered by the referee. Similarly, if a Loose Head were to be required and a team only had a Tight Head named as a Front Row replacement and he/she is not trained or able to play in that position then again uncontested scrums will be ordered by the referee.

If they are available, a team must have three (3) front row players in the front row at all times in an uncontested scrum, only when there is no available front row replacement or substitute is any other player permitted to play in the front row Law 3.15 applies

A Club may play without any named replacements. If a Club names 12 players only there is no need to name more than three suitably trained and experienced front row players.

For clarification, the Laws of the Game state:

It is a team's responsibility to ensure that all front row players and front row replacements are suitable trained and experienced (Law 3.12)

When 16 or 17 players are nominated in a team there must be three (3) players who can play in the front row

When 18 players are nominated in a team there must be four (4) players who can play in the front row. (Law 3.8)

When 19, 20, 21 or 22 players are nominated in a team there must be five (5) players who can play in the front row to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required and, on the first occasion that a replacement prop forward is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums. When 19 Or 20 players are nominated in a team there must be

five (5) players who can play in the front row (two (2) Hookers and three (3) Prop Forwards) as outlined above)

In competitions which allow squads of 23, a player whose departure has caused the referee to order uncontested scrums cannot be replaced, even if a team decided to start the game with less than a 23-man squad.

For the Premier Division only. As provided above, when 23 players are nominated in a team there must be six players who can play in the front row to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion that a replacement tight-head prop forward and on the first occasion that a replacement loose-head prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

Where uncontested scrums are ordered as a result of there being no suitably trained and experienced front row players for any reason, the team concerned shall not be entitled to replace the player whose departure caused the uncontested scrums. Law 3.16 applies.

If a front row player is issued with a red or yellow card and as a result, uncontested scrums are requested, then there is no need to further reduce the playing numbers.

- Should a team be unable to field a front row at the start of a match, the match will begin with uncontested scrums. In such a scenario, the offending team will have to start the match with 14 players (it is the decision of the offending club which player they choose to remove, save that each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum). The offending club will then only be entitled to two replacements for the match.
- Should a fixture start with contested scrums but, during the course of the match, a front row forward is unable to continue (the "Injured Forward"):
 - a) Where there is a front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be replaced by the front row forward replacement. In such a scenario, the offending team may elect to move to uncontested scrums. However, should the offending team elect to do so, they must remove another player of their choice from their team (i.e., they will continue the match with 14 players). Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.
 - If a team starts a fixture with contested scrummaging and has the required front row cover to ensure they have named replacements but has to go to uncontested scrummaging they will still be allowed to use the named replacements for the remainder of the match.
 - b) Where there is no front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be removed but not replaced. In such a scenario, the match will proceed with uncontested scrums. Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.
 - c) If a team is notified by their opponents prior to a scheduled fixture that scrums will be going uncontested, then the team not electing to begin uncontested will still be required to name five front row forwards in order to name a squad of 20 in line with National League Regulations.

NB: In uncontested scrums there must always be 8 players in the scrum and the No8 from either side cannot pick up.

CHANGES ARE ALSO IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION 5.7 OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES

The replacement of a front row forward must come from suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from the nominated replacements.

If after a front row player has been sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended, and there are no further front row players available from the nominated team, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the team electing to go uncontested will be unable to replace the offending player. It is not the responsibility of the match official to determine the suitability of trained front row replacements nor their availability, as this is a team responsibility.

To avoid confusion and to make everyone aware of the rules relating to the number of substitutes that can be used, please see the following examples, relating to World Rugby Law 3 (Number of Players) and these National League Rules.

- (a) If Team A has only fifteen players (or less) available and it has three suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums.
- (b) If Team A has fifteen players (or less) and does not have three suitably trained players to play in the front row, then the match will start with uncontested scrums. Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to have two replacements (providing they have 16 available players for selection at the start of the match).
- (c) If Team A has only three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has four suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Team A is entitled to two replacements, but Team B will be able to have one additional replacement (i.e., a total of three replacements).
- (d) If Team A has less than three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has five suitably trained front row forwards, either on the field or as replacements, then Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to two replacements (providing they have 16 available players for selection at the start of the match) and Team B will be entitled to the full complement of replacements. The match will start with uncontested scrums.

In all cases, in relation to Team B, for it to have the full benefit of its replacements, it must start with the required number of suitably trained front row players and also the ability of replacing a front row forward with a nominated suitably trained front row replacement.

All suitably trained front row players must be highlighted on the official team sheet prior to the match.

If a match goes to uncontested scrums the relevant details are to be forwarded by the Match Official to the Union's Fixture Manager (see Rule 8b below).

In relation to uncontested scrums, the Number 8 from both teams are not allowed to pick up from the base of the scrum

AT ALL TIMES SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT.

5.8 Rolling Substitutions

Teams will be permitted to use rolling substitutions from the Championship and below with the following provisions in place

In a match where consent has been given prior to the Season and subject to Regulations each team shall be permitted to use rolling substitutions of not more than the maximum number of the Player interchanges (“Player Interchanges”) set out in the table below:

Number of Replacements - Player Interchanges

Up to 3	8
4	9
5	10

- After the Player Interchanges have been made no other replacements, substitutions or Player Interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a Player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less Player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row Player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.
- For the avoidance of doubt, Player Interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that if a Player has uncontrolled active bleeding and thus has to leave the field, this will not be classified as a Player Interchange if that Player is replaced by another Player. If a team has used all of its Player Interchanges, that Player may be replaced and the team shall continue. The Player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- Not more than three Player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and in all cases with the permission of the Referee.
- A Player must enter the field of play on the halfway line.
- A Player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that Player took to the field of play.
- A Player who is previously injured in the match shall not return to play as a Player Interchange.
- In addition to the powers set out in the Laws of the Game, Referees are entitled in their sole opinion to prohibit or postpone a Player Interchange if they believe either that the Player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly or where the replacement Player is not fit to continue playing in the match.
- Any player leaving the field of play with suspected concussion is not allowed to return to the field of play.

- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions Regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game these Regulations shall take precedence.

6. Entry Conditions

All Clubs participating in the National League shall comply with:

- these National League Rules;
- the Union's Memorandum of Association and the Articles;
- the Regulations and Resolutions of the Board of Directors of the Union;
- the World Rugby Bye Laws, Resolutions and Regulations relating to the Game, and
- the Laws of the Game.

7. Responsibility for Organisation

All matches in every Division of the National League will be under the control of the Union. The Competitions Management Committee will deal with all matters relating to every Division of the National League.

8. General Rules (refer to attached Guidance Document)

- All National League matches must be played and each Club must complete its National League programme. In the event that a National League match is not played the matter will be reported to the Competitions Management Committee who will establish why the match was not played. Where a match does not take place, it is the responsibility of the Honorary Secretary of each Club to notify the Union's Competitions Manager, in writing, within four working days of the reason(s) for the postponement (with supporting evidence if necessary). It is also the responsibility of the home side to make every effort to notify the appointed match official of the game not taking place. If the Competitions Management Committee is not satisfied with the explanation of the Club or Clubs concerned it may apply whatever sanction(s) it deems appropriate in its absolute discretion. Sanctions available to the Competitions Management Committee include (but are not limited to) the deduction of League points, the imposition of a fine, expunging the Club's League points total and/or expulsion from the National League.

If a Club's team fails to play any scheduled National League match in a season and that Club's team also fails, in the next following season, to play any scheduled National League match, the Competitions Management Committee shall consider the same and determine, in its absolute discretion, what sanction(s) should be applied. Such sanctions may include expelling the Club from the National League in the relevant season. Where a Club is expelled from the National League, the Competitions Management Committee may apply such criteria and/or conditions as it deems appropriate in its absolute discretion in respect of the Club prior to permitting the Club's participation in the National League in future seasons.

- Passive scrums
 - For all divisions other than the Premier Division

No match may be postponed because of the lack of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards. The match must be played on the due date with uncontested scrums. If prior to any match a Club becomes aware that it will be unable to field for that match a sufficient number of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, notify the opposing club and match officials that it will elect to take uncontested scrums during the match. Following the match, the Competitions Management Committee may consider the conduct of the Club and the reason for uncontested scrums and whether any sanction should be applied. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

ii) **For the Premier Division**

If a Club postpones a match because of the lack of suitably trained/experienced front row forwards, the Competitions Management Committee may consider the reasons for the postponement. It shall be a matter for the Club which caused the match to be postponed justifying its decision. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, it must continue the match with 14 men. For the avoidance of doubt this will apply regardless of whether the team consists of 22 or 23 men.

iii) **For all Divisions**

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, the matter will be reported to the Competitions Management Committee. The Competitions Management Committee may consider why passive scrums were necessary during that match. It shall be a matter for the Club which opted for uncontested scrums to explain to the Competitions Management Committee why it did so. The Competitions Management Committee may apply any sanction it deems appropriate if it is not satisfied with the Club's explanation.

If during the course of a match a team elects to take uncontested scrums, it must continue to have 8 players committed to each scrum. In addition, only the player in the scrum half position may play the ball from the scrum. For the avoidance of doubt the ball may not be played by the player in number 8 position within the scrum.

c. **Declaration of winners.** Winners of National League matches will be teams which have scored the greater number of points at the end of each match. For the avoidance of doubt and in compliance with the Laws of the Game (Law 6.A.12), the Referee will be the final arbiter as to the score of each National League match. National League points shall be awarded as follows:

Win	-	4 points
Draw	-	2 points
Defeat	-	0 points
Bonus Points	-	1 point for a team scoring 4 or more tries

1 point for a team losing by 7 points or less

- d. **National League placings** will be decided on the basis of League points gained during the season. Where teams have gained equal numbers of League points, the team with the most wins shall be given preference. If the number of wins is equal, the team with the fewest losses shall be given preference. If the number of losses is equal then the Club having recorded the most tries in the Season shall be given preference. If the number of tries is equal the points 'for' shall be divided by the points 'against' and the team with the highest factor shall be declared to have the better record.
- e. **Duration of play** – 80 minutes each match (40 minutes each half) plus any time permitted by the Match Official for delays (Laws of the Game – Law 5). At half time, an interval of not more than 10 minutes is allowed.
- f. **Fixture Arrangements.** National League matches must be played on the dates allocated unless otherwise previously agreed by the Competitions Management Committee. These will be decided by the Competitions Management Committee and circulated to Clubs as soon as practicable. The match will take place on the home Club's first pitch or on a suitable alternative.
- g. **Notification of Results.** The appointed Match Official will notify the Union of the result of each match by submitting the match result card electronically within 1 hour of the match taking place via the match official app. The appointed Match Official will also submit by e-mail team lists, which must be completed by officials from each team and handed to the match official prior to the kick-off.
- h. **Postponed, rearranged and abandoned matches**

- (i) Postponed or Rearranged Matches

National League matches must be played on the allocated dates unless a match is postponed because of ground or weather conditions or the Clubs concerned have mutually agreed to the postponement and have received the prior consent of the Union to its rearrangement. Consent to postpone fixtures where the Clubs concerned have mutually agreed to the postponement can be granted by the Union 48 hours prior to the fixture. However, consent to postpone fixtures in other such circumstances may not be given if sought less than seven days prior to the fixture. Where both Clubs have received the consent of the Union to postpone a fixture, then that fixture must be played, where practicable, within 21 days of the postponement. If the Clubs cannot agree on an alternative date within 14 days, the Union will determine the date of the rearranged fixture which will be the next available Saturday for both Clubs during the season with this not being subject to appeal by clubs unless a mutual agreement is reached on a rearranged date.

Fixtures that are unable to be rearranged for an available Saturday will automatically be set by the Competition Manager to take place midweek following Daylight Savings Time which is March 27th, 2022.

If the ground of the home Club is not fit because of weather or ground conditions or is unavailable for any other reason and the away fixture has not yet been played, Clubs should endeavour to switch the venue to the Away Club so that the fixture is played on that date.

Both Clubs must notify the Union's Fixture and Competitions Manager, in writing, of the new fixture date at least four working days prior to the match

being played. This timeline may be reduced in exceptional circumstances subject to the agreement of both Clubs and the availability of a suitably qualified referee.

Each Club must notify the Fixtures Manager in writing of the postponement or rearrangement of any fixture. If this written notification is not received the match will be deemed to be an unfulfilled fixture and the appropriate sanctions may be applied.

Any dispute in respect of such cancellation, postponement or rearrangement shall be referred to the Competitions Management Committee for determination.

When ground or weather conditions demand, and if requested to do so, an opportunity **must** be given to an official representative of the visiting Club, a Union Match Official living locally of similar standing to the appointed Match Official or an Officer of the Union to view the situation in sufficient time to allow matches to be postponed preventing unnecessary travelling. Clubs should undertake ground inspections no earlier than three hours before the scheduled kick off time except in cases where an earlier inspection is required to prevent an Away Club undertaking a long journey or in cases where the Match Official is travelling from a long distance. **Should the Clubs disagree on the condition of the ground, the match will not be played.** The Match Official appointed by the Union will report on the matter and that report will be considered by the Competitions Management Committee.

All matches must be played on the set dates except in the case of postponement because of adverse ground or weather conditions and/or requests from the appointed Broadcasters.

(ii) Abandoned Matches

All matches must be played to full time. The Match Official is to be the sole judge of the amount of time played. If a match is abandoned, then both Clubs' Honorary Secretaries must separately notify the Union of the fact in writing no later than 48 hours following the abandonment.

Should the difference in score be 30 or more points then the result of the fixture shall stand and be submitted including try count and there will be no requirement for a rearrangement. This is regardless of whether both teams agree or not.

If the difference in score is 29 points or less and if both Clubs agree then the Competitions Management Committee may permit the score, at the time of the abandonment, to stand. However, if both teams are in not in agreement, then the match is to be replayed.

Where such an abandoned match is to be replayed, the match will be played at the original venue or at a venue determined by the home Club. Any National League fixture which has been abandoned and is required to be played again must be rearranged by the Clubs and the date of the rearrangement notified to the Union's Fixture and Competitions Manager no later than 21 days of the original date. If details of the rearrangement are not supplied by the due date, then the Union will determine the date on which the rearranged fixture will be played. Both Clubs must notify the Union's Fixture and Competitions Manager in writing, of the new fixture date no later than four working days prior to the

match being played. This timeline may be reduced in exceptional circumstances, subject to the mutual agreement of both Clubs and the availability of a suitably qualified referee.

Covid-19 Related Postponements: Should a team be unable to play due to Covid-19 related reasons, then evidence will need to be produced to the Rugby Operations department to collaborate this and should it be satisfactory then the fixture will be rearranged for the next available Saturday following a proper isolation period if required.

- i. Protests and Disputes
 - (i) Save for matters which fall to be determined in accordance with the Union's Disciplinary Regulations, the Competition Management Committee shall be responsible for and have discretion in dealing with any protest or dispute arising out of the National League or these National League Rules (which shall include those relating to the application of the Premier Division Criteria). Any such protest or dispute must be made by a Club in writing to the Union's Administration Manager and accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be refunded. No protest or dispute relating to matches played in the Competition will be considered if made more than **10 days** after the end of the relevant match has taken place. The Competitions Management Committee shall have discretion to investigate any breach of these National League Rules at any time and to take such action as it shall deem appropriate. The Club who the appeal is made against will also be informed of the decision to do so by the Union once it has been agreed to hear the appeal.
 - (ii) Any Club that wishes to appeal a decision of the Competitions Management Committee made pursuant to these National League Rules may do so to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors, which may include the appointment of a legally qualified independent Chairman, provided that the Club's appeal is lodged in writing, with the Union's Competitions Manager no later than 14 days of the Competitions Management Committee's decision being notified to it, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be returned. If the decision is given orally, the period of 14 days shall run from the date of the oral decision but otherwise shall run from the date of receipt of the decision in writing by the Honorary Secretary of the Club. Please note that there is no obligation of the WRU or Competitions Management Committee to appoint a legally qualified independent Chairman.
 - (iii) In carrying out their functions pursuant to these National League Rules, the Competitions Management Committee and any appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors of the Union pursuant to Rule 8i(ii) shall have the power to regulate their own procedure in respect of the matters which fall to be considered by them.
 - (iv) It should be borne in mind that the bodies dealing with any protest or dispute, to include an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors, are not courts of law and are disciplinary, rather than arbitral, bodies. A member of the Competitions Management Committee will be entitled to attend any appeal to provide the rationale for the original decision taken. The representative of the Competitions Management Committee will not be a voting member at the appeal.

- (v) Please be aware of the WRU Disciplinary Regulations to remind players, coaches and spectators of their conduct and behaviour for all matches.

j. Penalties

- (i) The Competitions Management Committee may apply any appropriate sanction it deems fit to any Club without limitation, found to be in default, or failing to comply with these National League Rules.
- (ii) Where any Club has been found to have included an ineligible player (that is, a player who is not registered with a Club or granted a permit or is dual registered or a player whose name does not appear on the team sheet submitted by the Club in a National League match), the Competitions Management Committee shall have the power to penalise the offending Club further by the loss of League points and scores it may have accrued during the match and expunge the result from the League table.

Before action is taken under Rules j(i) or (ii), the Club will be offered the benefits of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Union.

- (iii) An official representative of both home and visiting teams will hand to the Match Official a team and replacement sheet prior to the kick-off. Only those players named on this list will be eligible to play in the match. An official representative of each Club has the right to examine their opponent's team list before and immediately after the match. A Club wishing to make an objection will bring it to the notice of the Match Official who will record the same. The Club raising the objection will bring it to the notice of the Union's Competitions Manager no later than 10 days of the end of the relevant match taking place, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may, or may not be returned.

k. Match Officials

Match Officials shall be appointed by the Union for all National League matches.

l. Kick Off

The kick-off time for National League matches shall be in accordance with the Union's Resolution 15, however, it is recommended that it is standardised at 2.30pm for Saturday matches for the Championship and Divisions 1 to 3 and Divisions 1 to 3 North. Clubs may agree a different kick-off time to that specified by the Union and shall request the Union's prior approval of the same which will usually be no later than seven days prior to the date of the relevant match. Where League fixtures are scheduled to be played on the day of an international rugby union match in which the Senior Men's Welsh National Team is participating, Clubs may agree a different kick-off time to that specified by the Union and shall request the Union's prior approval of the same which will usually be no later than seven days prior to the date of the relevant match.

For Premier Division matches, kick off times and days on which the matches shall be played will be determined by the Union and broadcasters for televised games and shall be notified to Premier Division Clubs by the Union.

Matches selected for broadcast are also expected to be played on the date and time determined by the Union and respective broadcaster. Should teams fail to fulfil its obligation in playing these matches on the requested date then they may be subject to harsher punishments and sanctions by the Competitions Management Committee which may include points deductions and or fines.

m. Financial Distribution

No prize money shall be awarded to Divisional winners or runners up.

n. Competitions Management Committee of the WRU

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to adapt any area contained within these regulations to ensure the integrity of the competition is maintained and the competition is concluded in a clear, fair and equitable manner.

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to suspend any sanction contained within these League rules should they deem it necessary and appropriate.

Criteria for Entry and Participation in the Premier Division with effect from August 2022.

2021-2022 season

1.1 In the 2021-2022 season, the Premier Division shall comprise the following Clubs:

Aberavon RFC
Bridgend RFC
Cardiff RFC
Carmarthen Quins RFC
Ebbw Vale RFC
Llandoverly RFC
Llanelli RFC
Merthyr RFC
Newport RFC
Pontypridd RFC
RGC 1404
Swansea RFC

1.2 In addition to the penalties for non-compliance set out in Appendix A hereto, if during the course of the 2021-2022 season a Club in the Premier Division fails to maintain the criteria that allowed it entry to the Premier Division in that season that Club will not receive:

- (a) funding from the Union; nor
- (b) its allocation of tickets for rugby International matches,
- (c) and if it remains the case that the Club does not have A Licence status at the end of the playing season, the Club shall drop to the bottom of the Division and be relegated.

from the time that the Club fails to satisfy the Entry/Participation criteria to the Premier Division until such time as the Club again satisfies that criteria in the case of (a) and then on a pro rata basis and in the case of (b) if the criteria is not satisfied by 31 December 2022 for all matches in the Six Nations Championship in 2022.

2022-2023 Season

2.1 To play in the Premier Division in the season 2022-2023, a Club that is participating in the Premier Division or Championship Division in the 2021-2022 Season must have applied for and met the criteria to hold an A Licence by 31 August 2022. The A Licence criteria is set out in Appendix A hereto.

2.2 Clubs wishing to apply for an A Licence will be required to complete and sign a Statement of Truth (found at Appendix B hereto). The Union is entitled to rely on the information provided by each Club in its Statement of Truth.

2.3 All inspections of facilities by the Union's Rugby Operations Department will be completed by 31 August 2022 in respect of Clubs that are participating in the Premier Division or Championship Division in the 2021-2022 Season. No inspections of such Clubs will be undertaken by the Union's Rugby Operations Department after 31 August 2022, unless the Competitions Management Committee so determines (either following an appeal by a Club, or of its own motion).

- 2.4 Works which have not been completed by a date to be determined by the Welsh Rugby Union by Clubs that are participating in the Premier Division or Championship Division in the 2022-23 Season shall not be considered by the Union's Rugby Operations Department in determining whether or not the criteria for an A Licence has been met unless the Competitions Management Committee so determines (either following an appeal by a Club or of its own motion).

SECTION 1: Rugby Department

Criteria Standard:

Clubs aspiring to achieve the criteria will have a Head Coach in place who has successfully completed the Union's Level 3 coaching qualification (or equivalent) as a minimum and is shown to be working towards level 4.

Criteria Requirements:

Rugby Criteria

All Indigo Premiership clubs must have the following structure in place;

- Head Coach – Level 3 (Working towards level 4)
- Assistant Coaches
- Strength and Conditioning Coach
- Full Medical Provision – Qualified Physiotherapist and Match Day Doctors at all fixtures
- Team Manager
- Analyst

Welsh Rugby Union Support:

Throughout the season the Welsh Rugby Union will continue to hold a variety of seminars relevant to the requirements set out in the criteria i.e., coaching, match officials, and the links between the disciplines, as well as analysis, injury prevention. Attendance at the seminars is compulsory for all the coaches supported by the WRU.

There will be designated people appointed whereby part of their key responsibility will be to support the coaches and referees of all Premier Division criteria clubs.

The Regions will also be encouraged to provide ongoing support to Premier Division Clubs in relation to coaching, selection, strength and conditioning, permitting of players etc. A healthy relationship and a close link is encouraged by all.

Referees:

The Union will allocate each Premier Division Club a Level 3 Referee with a Division 1 or Premier Division grade.

Section 2: FACILITIES

Club Requirements:

Security of Tenure:

The club should own its own ground or provide written proof of security of tenure for a rolling period of 5 years from August 2021 or from their date of entry into the Premier Division, whichever is later.

Spectator Facilities:

- Each club will need to provide a Safety Management Plan covering areas such as crowd safety, emergency contingency plans and stewarding plans. Venues in excess of 10,000 capacity will be required to provide a ground safety certificate.

- A grandstand is desirable but not mandatory
- On-site parking for vehicles, plus team buses, or an agreement must be in place for use of local parking facilities.
- Disabled facilities, including dedicated viewing areas, car parking and toilet facilities.
- Spectator toilets
- Clear, audible and competent PA system to all parts of the ground for spectator safety and enjoyment.
- Visible scoreboard

General Club Facilities:

- Guaranteed clubhouse and/or facilities complete with dedicated team dining area for all scheduled fixtures.
- Access to the ground for Emergency Services and broadcasters' access as and when required.
- Press, Media & Communication Requirements (essential for games to be televised and commercial reasons):
- Floodlighting is to be provided to a minimum lux capacity of 300. For those clubs who intend to be assessed for the national club criteria, the ability to increase their lux capacity to 500 must be available.
- Television gantry for accommodating television cameras and analysis personnel
- Designated Press area to include, adequate power points, radio points and ISDN lines or equivalent.
- Access to relevant areas to undertake pre- and post-match TV, radio and press interviews.
- Match day programme.
- Club website / Social Media account – regular updates with news and information about the club and fixtures / games.
- Compliance with RPMS and My WRU System

General Rugby Facilities:

- Even, full size quality playing field that obtains/maintains the standard as set in the individual club benchmarking process undertaken in the off-season inspection.
- Floodlighting to be available for Club games and training sessions as required.
- Separate medical, physiotherapy & drug testing area suitably equipped & staffed by qualified personnel at the club ground.

Training Facilities:

- Guaranteed access to training facilities, which may include an 'all weather' pitch or access to a training pitch away from the main field of play between October and March, and a general training pitch for the duration of the season.

Match Day Facilities:

- Dedicated area for both home and away Coaching Staff during play on match days.
- Separate changing facilities at the ground suitable for up to five individuals including a minimum of two showers for referees.
- Separate changing facilities for up to 30 members of both the home and away teams at the Club ground.
- Clearly defined and managed technical areas.

Section 3: Administration and Finance

- A Club Management committee with written evidence of clearly defined individual roles and responsibilities.
- Written delegated authority in relation to individuals who attend Premier Division meetings and are required to vote in relation to matters pertaining to the Premier Division.
- A management flow chart for the whole club structure.
- A club constitution.
- An agreed repayment plan for all outstanding loans.
- Compulsory audit of Club accounts accompanied by a signed copy of the previous year's audited accounts.
- Sufficient insurance cover, including club (Public Liability), player and coaching risks in accordance with World Rugby Regulations 23 and 9.
- In line with the Union's policy, clubs are to appoint a Safeguarding Officer and a point of contact for Anti-Doping.

Section 4: Regulatory Compliance:

- Compliance with Union and World Rugby rules and regulations and any World Rugby trial in operation.
- Specific compliance with the Union's Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH & DECLARATION OF INTENT FOR SEASON 2021-2022

By this document, which we have executed as a Deed, we [] on behalf of [] in our capacity as [] hereby confirm, warrant, represent and undertake that:

1. all of the information which has been provided to The Welsh Rugby Union Limited prior to the date hereof on behalf of [] in connection with the Criteria for entry to the WRU Premier Division is true and accurate in all respects; and or
2. all of the information which will hereafter be provided to The Welsh Rugby Union Limited on behalf of [] in connection with the Criteria for entry to the WRU Premier Division and all subsequent seasons will be true and accurate in all respects.

In addition, we [] on behalf of [] in our capacity as [] hereby declare that it is the club's intention to be assessed under the A Licence Criteria, at the enhanced standard which is to be met in all areas.

Executed as a Deed this [] day of [] 2021

Executed as a Deed
by []
whose signature is here subscribed
in the presence of:

.....
Witness

Executed as a Deed
by []
whose signature is here subscribed
in the presence of:

.....
Witness

Executed as a Deed
by []
whose signature is here subscribed
in the presence of:

.....
Witness

