

# SWFA Regulations

## for the

# Pyramid Structure

## Tiers 4 and below – Men's 2025-26



## 1. Responsibilities and Objectives

(a) The Pyramid League System provides football clubs throughout Wales with a framework of competitive men's football appropriate to their playing standards, ground facilities, geographical location 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 South Wales Football Association Ltd ("SWFA") has responsibility for those Leagues in the Pyramid League System below the National Leagues (Tier 4 and below).

(c) Except where otherwise stated, these Regulations apply to Pyramid Tier 4 and below within the SWFA area.

## 2. League Structure

(a) The Pyramid Tier 4 and below shall be determined by the SWFA. Each League (and its divisions) will be placed at a given Tier in the system, with the South Wales Premier League Premier Division at the head.

(b) No League 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 SWFA and/or FAW.

(c) The SWFA will control these Regulations. No League in the Pyramid Tier 4 and below shall change the number of its divisions or number of teams playing in a division without the written permission of the SWFA.

(d) Divisions in Pyramid Tier 4 and below shall contain no more than 16 teams, unless with the written permission of the SWFA and/or FAW.

(e) Every League in the Pyramid Tier 4 and below shall conform with the decisions of the SWFA and/or FAW as laid down from time to time.

(f) All clubs in the South Wales Premier League Premier Division must hold a current triennial Tier 4 licence under the Tier 4 Club Licensing Regulations to play in the South Wales Premier League Premier Division. Any club playing in the South Wales Premier League Premier Division that fails to obtain renewal of its licence for the next Playing Season shall be relegated one Tier from the South Wales Premier League Premier Division to Tier 5 at the end of the Playing Season in which the unsuccessful application was made or if their licence has expired and no application for renewal made.

(g) All Tier 5 & 6 clubs must satisfy the Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations to play in Tier 5 & 6. Any club playing in Tier 5 & 6 that fails to satisfy the Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations for the next Playing Season shall be relegated to Tier 7 at the end of the Playing Season in which the unsuccessful application was made or if their licence has expired and no application for renewal made.

## 3. Promotion / Relegation

**(a)** Save where the SWFA otherwise directs under Regulation 3(g), there shall be automatic promotion and relegation between the Tiers of the Pyramid Tiers 4 -6 (and promoted/relegated into and out of Tier 6), provided the promoted club meets the necessary Club Licensing Criteria. A Qualifying Club (and a club otherwise promoted into Tier 6 from Tier 7) will not be promoted if it is not successful in its application.

**(b)** No National League or Area Association will be allowed to operate a Club Licensing Criteria for promotion which is more stringent than the level of the Pyramid Tiers 1 - 3 they feed into.

**(c)** The Club Licensing Criteria application process shall be as follows: -

i. Clubs must apply to the SWFA in writing as per the Tier 4 Club Licensing Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the criteria in the SWFA Tier 4 Club Licensing Regulations for playing in the South Wales Premier League Premier Division.

ii. Tier 7 clubs must apply to the SWFA in writing as per the Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations if they wish to be assessed against the criteria in the SWFA Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations for playing in Tier 5 & 6; and

**(d)** A Qualifying Club in any division of Pyramid Tiers 5 and 6 that applies for and meets the relevant Club Licensing Criteria and achieves a promotional place in its division of a Tier and a club from Tier 7 that achieves a promotional place to Tier 6 and meets the Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations 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 4 – 6

**(f)** Subject to the overriding provisions of Regulations 2(d), 2(f), 2(g) and 2(h) and the SWFA's right to prescribe the number of clubs to be promoted and relegated within the Pyramid Tiers 4 – 6 under Regulation 3(g), promotion, and relegation at the end of the Playing Season shall be as follows: -

i. between Tiers 4 and 5 – the clubs finishing the bottom two places of the South Wales Premier League Premier Division shall be relegated to Tier 5. These clubs will be replaced in the South Wales Premier League Premier Division by the clubs finishing in first 2 positions of Tier 5 but where a club finishing in first 2 positions do not meet the Tier 4 Club Licensing Regulations the club finishing in third and below will not be promoted.

ii. between Tiers 5 and 6: -

a. the clubs finishing in the bottom four places of Tier 5 will be relegated to a division of Tier 6 and placed in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 6 by the SWFA using its power under Regulation 3(g).

iii. between Tiers 6 and 7: -

a. clubs finishing in the bottom three places in each of the two divisions of Tier 6 may be relegated to Tier 7 and (after considering the representations made at the SWFA Football Pyramid Committee meeting held under Regulation 5(b)) placed in a division of Tier 7 by the SWFA in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 7;

b. 6 clubs will be promoted from Tier 7, subject to winner respective SWFA Play-Offs. The promoted clubs will be determined by the SWFA Football Pyramid Committee, SWFA Board or SWFA Officers and placed in the most geographically appropriate division of Tier 6 as stipulated by

the SWFA (after considering the representations made at the SWFA Football Pyramid Committee meeting held under Regulation 5(b)).

c. the clubs finishing in first position in each of the nine divisions of Tier 7 shall take part in Play-Off Matches subject to meeting Tier 6 Club Licensing Regulations for the 6 promotions places available in Tier 6. Where a club finishing in first position does not meet the Tier 6 Club Licensing Regulations, the club finishing in second position in that division shall be permitted take part in the relevant Play-Off Match provided it meets the Tier 6 Club Licensing Regulations but no club below second position of Tier 7 shall take part in a Play-Off Match; Only 1 club from each Tier 7 League can take part in the playoffs for promotion to Tier 6.

d. there will be Play-Off Matches featuring up to nine clubs arranged as directed by SWFA Football Pyramid Committee, or SWFA Board or SWFA Officers at their absolute discretion of the SWFA. Each match will be played at a neutral ground selected and organised by the SWFA; and

e. 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

**(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 the South Wales Premier League Premier Division, Championship or a division of Tiers 6 (as the case may be) having more or less than 16 teams in the next Playing Season or, in the case of Tiers 6, any club playing in a division inappropriate to its geographical location. In such circumstances, the SWFA 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)** Clubs must inform the SWFA by 31<sup>st</sup> December each year of clubs that have made application to be assessed against the Tier 4 and/or Tier 6 Club Licensing Regulations and therefore who, if successful, will be eligible to be promoted to Tier 4 or Tier 6 (via Play-Offs) of the Pyramid League System at the end of the Playing Season, irrespective of League positions at that date.

**(i)** All clubs who wish to make an application to be assessed against the relevant Club Licensing Criteria and therefore who, if successful, will be eligible to be promoted to or within the Pyramid Tiers 4 & 6 in the following Playing Season must do so in writing to the SWFA between the start of the Playing Season and 31<sup>st</sup> December. A first ground inspection will be made before 1st February to inform clubs what work they are required to do (if any) to meet the ground-related Club Licensing Criteria but (subject to anything to the contrary in the Tier 4 Club Licensing Regulations, Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations, as applicable) they must complete all work to comply in full of the Club Licensing Criteria SWFA by 30th April to be eligible for

promotion. Save as permitted in the Tier 4 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations, under no circumstances will a club be promoted if they do not meet the Club Licensing Criteria by the 30th of April deadline. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines contained or referred to in this sub-clause of the Regulations.

**(j)** Any club proposing ground sharing arrangements for matches in the next Playing Season in the Pyramid Tiers 4 – 6 must ensure written confirmation is provided to the SWFA by 1st March and must meet Club Licensing Criteria for the relevant Tier. This arrangement must satisfy the SWFA and must be for a minimum of one Playing Season. Any club entering into a ground sharing arrangement for one Playing Season and being promoted on this basis, will automatically be relegated after one Playing Season if they are unable to continue the arrangement and are unable to confirm their facilities for the following Playing Season by 1<sup>st</sup> March. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines in this sub-clause of the Regulations.

**(k)** The inspection of clubs' facilities for matches in the Tier 4 - 6 shall be the responsibility of the SWFA as per the SWFA Tier 4 - 6 Club Licensing Regulations, respectively. The SWFA shall be solely responsible for determining whether the applicant complies with the Club Licensing Criteria of the relevant Tier.

Applicant clubs must pay one ground inspection fee and the highest Tier of the pyramid to which the Club applies, is the applicable fee.

Application for Tier 4 Licence Ground Inspection = £50

Application for Tier 6 Licence Ground Inspection = £50

**(l)** In respect of the Pyramid Tiers 7, Leagues must advise the SWFA within two business days of 30<sup>th</sup> April of the clubs who, subject to these Regulations, who have been declared champions or runners up of their respective Leagues.

## **SWFA Play Off Regulations from Tier 7 to Tier 6** (South Wales Premier League Division 1 East/West)

The following system of play-off matches will be used at the end of each season for any play-off matches.

With only six places for promotion available, if more than six leagues provide nominees who have applied for promotion, play-offs will be necessary.

To try and cover all eventualities, we have made arrangements that will apply in any number of successful clubs from seven to nine. (If six or fewer Leagues nominate clubs for promotion then all will be promoted automatically without the need for any play-off matches)

In all cases, teams qualifying for the play-offs will be ranked in order using the following criteria.

1. That teams will all be ranked by the average number of points won per game played (commonly known as the 'PPG' method). This average to be calculated to three decimal places. If a League decides to operate a split season (in the way that the Cymru Premier League is currently set up) the team's record for the whole season must be taken into account.
2. All Champion Clubs will be ranked in one list and all runner-up clubs will be ranked in a separate list. All Champion Clubs will be ranked higher than all runner-up clubs when the final combined list is produced.

3. Teams being equal on the above will then be separated by the greatest average goal difference i.e., total goals scored in the League minus total goals conceded, divided by the number of League games played.
4. Teams still being equal will be decided according to the club with the greater number of average goals per game scored (i.e., total League goals scored divided by total number of League games played)

The following formats will then be used for any play-off competition

1. In the event of seven teams qualifying

In the event that there are seven potential clubs applying for promotion then the top five clubs ranked in this way will be automatically promoted while the clubs ranked sixth and seventh will play-off in a single match against each other for the last promotion place.

2. In the event of eight teams qualifying

In the event that there are eight potential champions applying for promotion then the top four clubs ranked in this way will be automatically promoted while the club ranked fifth will play against the club ranked eighth and the clubs ranked sixth and seventh will play-off against each other

3. In the event of nine teams qualifying

4. In the event that there are nine potential champions applying for promotion then the top three clubs ranked in this way will be automatically promoted while the remaining clubs will play in play-off matches

a) Team ranked fourth v Team ranked ninth;

b) Team ranked fifth v Team ranked eighth;

c) Team ranked sixth v Team ranked seventh;

All play-off matches in points 1, 2, & 3 above will be single games comprising 90 minutes and if necessary extra time and penalties in accordance with Laws of the Game.

## **Relegation from Tier 6** (South Wales Premier League Division 1 East/West)

A club relegated from Tier 6 will be placed in Tier 7 League which they were promoted from.

## **Vacancy**

The South Wales Premier League is to comprise of 48, if prior to the commencement of the South Wales Premier League playing season, a vacancy becomes available, the best placed losing team from the PPG Playoff table will be invited to fill the vacancy. If they decline the vacancy the next best club will be offered the vacancy and so on. If none of the losing teams from the playoffs accept the vacancy the South Wales Premier League will run play with a reduced number of clubs.

## 4. The Movement of Clubs within the Pyramid Tiers 4 - 6 other than by Promotion or Relegation

(a) There is no movement between Tiers 4 – 6, other than by promotion and relegation.

(b) If two or more Qualifying Clubs or one Qualifying Club and another club 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 Pyramid Tiers 4 - 6 in the following Playing Season, the following will apply: -

i. A joint application by the two clubs must be received by the SWFA Hon General Secretary by email to [secretary@southwalesfa.co.uk](mailto:secretary@southwalesfa.co.uk) of the SWFA 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 Club Licensing 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 SWFA.

iii. The application will be determined by the SWFA Board in their 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 Pyramid Tiers 4 - 6 to that applied for; or

c. refuse consent for the Proposed Merged Club to play in Pyramid Tiers 4 - 6 but order the Proposed Merged Club play in a League at a Tier in the Pyramid League System below Tier 6; or

d. in any of the above cases where consent is granted or an order made, impose such conditions as the Directors think necessary including, without limitation, a condition requiring the Proposed Merged Club to discharge (in whole or in part in the Directors’ absolute discretion) the Football Related Liabilities of both applicant clubs before the commencement of the next Playing Season; or

e. 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 SWFA will ordinarily expect the applicant club to apply to join the Pyramid League System either at Tier 7 or two Tiers below the level at which the other (connected) club competed prior to being wound up, whichever is the lower.

(c) If a club wishes to change its name, this must be received by the SWFA Hon General Secretary by email to [secretary@southwalesfa.co.uk](mailto:secretary@southwalesfa.co.uk) by 1st June.

## 5. First Aid Officer

1. The club Must have appointed a First Aid Officer.
2. The First Aid Officer must hold one of the following minimum qualifications:
  - a) Valid FAW First Aid Award
  - b) Any equivalent award, as approved by the FAW Medical Officer.
3. The club will be responsible for managing first aid relating to spectators
4. The First Aid Officer must attend all matches and training.
  - a) A replacement can be appointed if they meet the required qualifications above.
5. The First Aid Officer Must be duly registered on COMET
6. They must be duly registered with the FAW and hold a valid FAW DBS certificate.

## 6. SWFA Pyramid Football Committees

(a) A SWFA Pyramid Football committee (“PFC”) shall discuss matters of policy relating to Club Licensing Criteria and promotion and relegation issues which are common to the Leagues in the Pyramid League System.

(b) The PFC shall meet at least 3 times a year and will be arranged by the SWFA Hon General Secretary. Member of PFC are invited to attend the committee meeting to discuss relevant matters concerning promotion and relegation between Tiers 4 - 7.

(c) Any other meetings of the PFC that are deemed necessary can be called at any time by SWFA Hon General Secretary upon giving the notice referred to in Regulation 5(b) above.

(d) Meetings of the PFC shall be chaired by a SWFA pyramid chair, in their absence an officer of SWFA will take the chair.

**(e)** The expense of holding meetings of the PFC shall be borne by the SWFA. The expenses of the relevant representatives attending PFC and/or Joint Liaison meetings shall be met by the SWFA League the delegate is representing.

**(f)** PFC shall have no jurisdiction over, or responsibility for, boundary adjustments for clubs playing in SWFA. Such jurisdiction and responsibility shall rest solely with the SWFA Board.

*As approved by the SWFA Board October 2024 (and revised December 2024)*