

SWFA Regulations for the Pyramid Structure

Tiers 4 and below – Men's 2026-27

1 Responsibilities and Objectives

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The South Wales Football Association ("SWFA") has responsibility for those Leagues in the Pyramid League System below the National Leagues (Tier 4 and below).
- 1.3 Except where otherwise stated, these Regulations apply to Pyramid Tier 4 and below within the SWFA area.

2 League Structure

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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 Football Association of Wales ("FAW").
- 2.3 The SWFA will control these Regulations. No League in the between Pyramid Tier 4 and 7 inclusive shall change the number of its divisions or number of teams playing in a division without the written permission of the SWFA.
- 2.4 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 via the SWFA.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 All clubs in the South Wales Premier League Premier Division must hold a current 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 it's a licence 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 they failed to meet Tier 4 Club Licensing Regulations (subject to meeting Tier 5/6 Club Licensing Regulations).

- 2.7 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 obtain Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations shall be relegated to Tier 7 at the end of the Playing Season in which they failed to meet Tier 5 & 6 Club Licensing Regulations 3.

Promotion / Relegation

- 3.1 Save where the SWFA otherwise directs under Regulation, 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.
- 3.2 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 above Tier 4.
- 3.3 The Club Licensing Criteria application process shall be as follows:-
- 3.3.1 Clubs must purchase a Tier 4 licence via Comet 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 no later than the 31st of December in the season with which they are applying for a licence.
- 3.3.2 Tier 7 clubs must purchase a Tier 5 & 6 licence via Comet 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 6 no later than the 31st of December in the season with which they are applying for a licence; and
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5

Only a club's officially designated first team shall be eligible to participate in Pyramid Tiers 4 to 7 inclusive. No reserve team, development team, second team, or any other affiliated team shall be permitted to participate in these tiers. Notwithstanding the foregoing, this restriction shall not apply where the SWFA Tier 7 League operates as a single-division competition, in which case a reserve team, development team, second team, or other affiliated team may participate in Tier 7, subject to any other applicable league rules and regulations.

3.6 Subject to the overriding provisions of Regulations and the SWFA's right to prescribe the number of clubs to be promoted and relegated within the Pyramid Tiers 4 – 6 under promotion, and relegation at the end of the Playing Season shall be as follows:-

3.6.1 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.

3.6.2 between Tiers 5 and 6:-

3.6.2.1 The clubs finishing in the top two places of each division of Tier 6 shall replace the bottom four places of Tier 5.

3.6.2.2 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.

3.6.3 between Tiers 6 and 7:-

3.6.3.1 Clubs finishing in the bottom three positions of each division within Tier 6 shall be relegated to Tier 7. Following consideration of any representations made at the SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee meeting, the SWFA shall determine and allocate each relegated club to the Tier 7 division that it considers to be the most geographically appropriate.

3.6.3.2 6 clubs will be promoted from Tier 7, subject to winning respective SWFA Play-Offs. The promoted clubs will be determined by the SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee and/or

SWFA Board and/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 Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee meeting

3.6.3.3 the clubs finishing in first position in each of the nine divisions of Tier 7 shall take part in Play-Off Matches (in accordance with SWFA Play off regulations) 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 and had applied for a Tier 6 Club Licence in accordance with Tier 6 Club Licensing Regulations but no club below second position of Tier 7 shall take part in a Play-Off Match or be considered for the playoffs; Only one (1) club from each Tier 7 League shall be eligible to participate in the promotion play-offs to Tier 6. Eligibility is subject to the club having submitted an application for, and obtained, a Tier 6 Club Licence in accordance with the applicable Tier 6 Club Licensing Regulations and within any prescribed deadlines.

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

3.6.4 The team which has scored the most goals will be declared the winner, in the event of the scores being level at the end of 90 minutes play. the winners will be determined by the taking of Kicks in accordance with 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:-

- 3.6.4.1 reducing the number of clubs relegated from the higher Tier.
- 3.6.4.2 increasing the number of clubs relegated from the lower Tier.
- 3.6.4.3 increasing or decreasing the number of clubs promoted into or out of any Tier; or
- 3.6.4.4 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.
- 3.6.5 Clubs must purchase a Tier 4 licence via Comet by 31st December each year 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.
- 3.6.6 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 purchase a Tier 4 and/or 6 licence via Comet between the start of the Playing Season and 31st December. A first ground inspection will be made before 15th of 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 no later than 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.

- 3.6.7 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 31st of December if applying from Tier 7 or if they already hold a SWFA Tier 4-6 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 1st March. Time shall be of the essence in respect of all deadlines in this sub-clause of the Regulations.
- 3.6.8 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.
- 3.6.8.1 Applicant clubs must pay one ground inspection fee and the highest Tier of the pyramid to which the Club applies, is the applicable fee.
- 3.6.8.2 Application for Tier 4 Licence Ground Inspection as shown on Comet
- 3.6.8.3 Application for Tier 6 Licence Ground Inspection = as shown on Comet
- 3.6.9 For Tier 7 of the Pyramid, each League shall notify the SWFA, within two calendar days of either (i) the date on which its champion and/or runner-up is formally determined, or (ii) 30 April, whichever occurs first, of the club or clubs that, subject to these Regulations, have been declared the champion and/or runner-up of that League.
- 3.6.10 The awarding of points for matches that do not take place is strictly prohibited. In instances where a club fails to fulfil a fixture, the opposing team shall not be granted a 3–0 win, nor any other result, without the match being physically contested. All points must be earned on the field of play. The awarding points for matches that do not take place is prohibited. For

example, if a club fails to fulfil a fixture, the opposing team must not be granted a 3–0 win or any other result without the match being played.

- 3.6.11 Clubs must participate within the geographical area in which they are currently based, or have historically been based, provided football at the relevant level is available within that area. The boundaries governing such participation are strictly determined by the SWFA.
- 3.6.12 Any club, or team within a club, entering the Pyramid for the first time shall be placed in the lowest tier of the league structure for which it has applied and within the geographically appropriate league. Applications for promotion to Tier 6 shall only be accepted from clubs that have maintained continuous affiliation with the SWFA throughout the current season and the two immediately preceding seasons.
- 3.6.13 Any club or team that withdraws, from a tier of the pyramid between Tier 4 and Tier 7 inclusive during the course of a season shall, upon re-entry, be placed at the lowest level of the pyramid within the geographically appropriate league, unless otherwise determined by the SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee and/or the SWFA Board and/or SWFA Officers at its sole discretion, the decision of the SWFA shall be final.
- 3.6.14 Any club or team folds and is playing at between Tier 4 and Tier 7 inclusive during the course of a season shall, if they reform and re-enter the pyramid be placed at the lowest level of the pyramid within the geographically appropriate league, unless otherwise determined by the SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee and/or the SWFA Board and/or SWFA Officers at its sole discretion, the decision of the SWFA shall be final.
- 3.6.15 Any Club or team that has competed at between Tier 4 and Tier 7 inclusive during the current Season may apply to be placed no more than two divisions below its previous playing level for the following Season. Any such application must be submitted to the SWFA no later than 31 May. All applications shall be considered by the SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee and/or the SWFA Board and/or SWFA Officers, as

determined by the SWFA. Following consideration, the SWFA may, at its absolute discretion, approve the application, refuse the application, or assign the Club to an alternative division placement as it considers appropriate. The decision of the SWFA shall be final.

- 3.6.16 Any team that transfers from one club to another and that competed at Tier 4 or below during the applicable Season shall, for the commencement of the following Season, be placed at the lowest tier of the football pyramid within the geographically appropriate league. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee, the SWFA Board, and/or duly authorised SWFA Officers may, at their sole and absolute discretion, determine an alternative placement where they consider it appropriate to do so. Any such decision shall be final and binding, with no right of appeal unless otherwise provided for under SWFA Rules. No team shall be permitted to transfer from one club to another during an ongoing Season.

3.6.17 Any club, team, or side competing at Tier 4 and below of the Pyramid System, Tier 3 and below of the Women's Pyramid, or in any Youth or Junior competition under the jurisdiction of the SWFA, that withdraws from a league or division after admission shall have all league results and records expunged from the competition records. In addition, the club/team shall forfeit any league bond, deposit, or other security held by the league, where applicable.

4 Play-Off System and Procedures

- 4.11 At the conclusion of each season, a system of play-off matches will be implemented if required.
- 4.12 All nine (9) leagues operating at Tier 7 and below may potentially nominate either a champion club or, where the champion club does not wish to or cannot apply for promotion, or the runner-up club. As there are only six (6) promotion places available, play-offs will be necessary if more than six clubs are nominated. Only one club per league can be nominated and only the champion club or runner up can be nominated.
- 4.13 Only clubs that have formally applied for promotion and purchased a Tier 6 Licence via Comet by the 31st December, and has been nominated by their respective league, and granted a provisional Tier 6 SWFA Licence will be eligible to participate in the playoffs.

- 4.14 If six or fewer clubs are nominated, they will be promoted automatically, and no play-off matches will be held. To account for all scenarios, the following procedures will apply where there are between seven and nine eligible clubs.
- 4.15 All qualifying clubs must have completed their regular League fixtures no later than 30th April, to be considered for promotion, any club refusing to complete their season will not be eligible for consideration for promotion.

4.2 Ranking of Teams

- 4.2.1 Clubs qualifying for the play-offs will be ranked according to the following criteria:
 - 4.2.1.1 Points per game (PPG): Teams will be ranked by their average points per game, calculated to three decimal places. For leagues operating a split-season format (e.g., Cymru Premier League structure), results from the full season will be used.
 - 4.2.1.2 runner-up clubs in a separate list. When combined, every champion club will be ranked above every runner-up.
 - 4.2.1.3 Goal difference: Where teams are tied on PPG, the club with the higher average goal difference (goals scored minus goals conceded, divided by games played) will rank higher.
 - 4.2.1.4 Goals scored: If still equal, the club with the higher average goals scored per game (total goals scored divided by games played) will rank higher.
 - 4.2.1.5 Red Cards: If still equal, the club with the least amount of red card per game (total red cards divided by games played) will rank higher.
 - 4.2.1.6 Where clubs are still tied the clubs will be ranked alphabetically.

4.3 Play-Off Formats

4.3.1 Seven teams qualifying

- 4.3.1.1 The top five ranked clubs will be promoted automatically.
- 4.3.1.2 Clubs ranked 6th and 7th will play a single match to determine the final promotion place.

4.3.2 Eight teams qualifying

- 4.3.2.1 The top four ranked clubs will be promoted automatically.
- 4.3.2.2 Club ranked 5th will play against club ranked 8th.

- 4.3.2.3 Club ranked 6th will play against club ranked 7th.
 - 4.3.2.4 Winners will secure the remaining promotion places.
 - 4.3.3 Nine teams qualifying
 - 4.3.3.1 The top three ranked clubs will be promoted automatically.
 - 4.3.3.2 The following play-off matches will determine the remaining three promotion places:
 - 4.3.3.3 Club ranked 4th will play against club ranked 9th.
 - 4.3.3.4 Club ranked 5th will play against club ranked 8th.
 - 4.3.3.5 Club ranked 6th will play against club ranked 7th.
 - 4.3.3.6 Winners will secure the remaining promotion places.
- 4.4 Match Regulations for playoff games
 - 4.4.1 All play-off matches will consist of 90 minutes only. No extra time will be played; tied matches will go directly to penalty kicks in accordance with the Laws of the Game.
 - 4.4.2 Matches will be scheduled during May. The Association reserves the right to arrange fixtures on any day of the week, including Sundays and Bank Holidays, evening Kick offs will be from 6pm
 - 4.4.3 Any club unable to participate on the appointed date or rearranged date will be removed from the playoffs.
 - 4.4.4 The Association reserves the right to select any ground it deems suitable, including venues outside the SWFA boundaries.
 - 4.4.5 In the event of a postponement, the Association will provide at least two calendar days' notice of the rearranged fixture, where possible.
 - 4.4.6 Free dates requested or accepted by leagues will not be considered by the Association under any circumstances, the Association will also not accept free date requests.
 - 4.4.7 Clubs unable to fulfil their fixtures will be disqualified from the play-offs.
- 5. Relegation from Tier 6 (South Wales Premier League Division 1 East/West)
 - 5.1 A club relegated from Tier 6 will be placed in Tier 7 League which they were promoted from.
 - 5.2 Vacancy

- 5.2.1 The South Wales Premier League is to comprise of no more than 48 teams, 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.
6. The Movement of Clubs within the Pyramid Tiers 4- 6 other than by Promotion or Relegation
- 6.1 There is no movement between Tiers 4 – 6, other than by promotion and relegation.
7. Clubs wishing to merge.
- 7.1 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:-
- 7.2 A joint application by the two clubs must be received by the SWFA Hon General Secretary by email to secretary@southwalesfa.co.uk of the SWFA no later than 31st of May.
- 7.3 The application should include details of:-
- 7.3.1 the reason for the application.
- 7.3.2 the proposed playing name.
- 7.3.3 a description of the ground facilities and evidence of security of tenure that meets the relevant Club Licensing Criteria.
- 7.3.4 identification of all Football Related Liabilities.
- 7.3.5 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
- 7.3.6 a declaration that each applicant club is compliant with the Rules and Rules of Membership of SWFA.

- 7.4 The application will be determined by the SWFA Board in their absolute discretion. Without limiting such discretion, the Directors shall have the power to:-
- 7.4.1 grant consent as applied for; or
 - 7.4.2 grant consent in principle but order the Proposed Merged Club play at a different Tier in Pyramid between Tiers 4 Tier 7 inclusive to that applied for; or
 - 7.4.3 refuse consent for the Proposed Merged Club to play in Pyramid between Tiers 4 and Tier 7 inclusive but order the Proposed Merged Club play in a League at a Tier in the Pyramid League System below Tier 6; or
 - 7.4.4 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
 - 7.4.5 refuse the application. Solely as guidance to any potential applicant under this Regulation 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.
8. Clubs wishing to change name
- 8.1 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 by 31st May, and in accordance to SWFA Supplementary rule 2.3.6 as shown in SWFA Handbook.
9. First Aid Officer
- 9.1 The club Must have appointed a First Aid Officer.
 - 9.2 The First Aid Officer must hold one of the following minimum qualifications:
 - 9.2.1 Valid FAW First Aid Award
 - 9.2.2 Any equivalent award, as approved by the FAW Medical Officer.
 - 9.3 The club will be responsible for managing first aid relating to spectators
 - 9.4 The First Aid Officer must attend all matches and training.

- 9.5 A replacement can be appointed if they meet the required qualifications above.
 - 9.6 The First Aid Officer Must be duly registered on COMET
 - 9.7 They must be duly registered with the FAW and hold a valid FAW DBS certificate.
10. SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions (“MFCC”) Committee
- 10.1 A SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions committee (“MFCC”) 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.
 - 10.2 The MFCC shall meet at least 3 times a year and meetings will be arranged by the SWFA Hon General Secretary. Members of MFCC are invited to attend the committee meeting to discuss relevant matters concerning promotion and relegation between Tiers 4 – 7 and all Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee.
 - 10.3 Any other meetings of the MFCC that are deemed necessary can be called at any time by SWFA Hon General Secretary upon giving the notice referred to in Regulation 10.2 above.
 - 10.4 Meetings of the MFCC shall be chaired by a SWFA Male Football and Cup Competitions Committee chair, in their absence an officer of SWFA will take the chair.
 - 10.5 The expense of holding meetings of the MFCC shall be borne by the SWFA. The expenses of the relevant representatives attending MFCC and/or Joint Liaison meetings shall be met by the SWFA League the delegate is representing.
 - 10.6 MFCC 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 and/or SWFA Officers.