FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF WALES
CLUB LICENSING QUALITY STANDARD

Club Licensing & Club Monitoring Policy

REQUIREMENT 8

Background

The Football Association of Wales has operated a Club Licensing system in the men's game since season 2003/04 and it has been applied each season thereafter and will continue to be operated annually.

This enabled those clubs who received a licence to enter UEFA club competitions having qualified on sporting merit. In Football Season 2007/08, the Association introduced a Second Version of the Manual, which was accredited by UEFA in October 2006, which further enhanced the system and the criteria. In 2009/10 season the FAW's UEFA Regulations were approved by UEFA which superseded the Version 2 Manual. Also, in the 2009/10 season, the FAW ran a domestic club licensing system for the first time, which became mandatory for all clubs wishing to participate in the restructured Welsh Premier League in 2010/11. This ensures that all clubs in the top division must meet a minimum set of standards, whether they have ambitions to play in UEFA Club Competitions or not. The FAW has also introduced minimum standards across Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the Men's Welsh Football Pyramid which are based on the Men's UEFA and FAW Tier 1 Club Licensing Regulations thus increasing the standard further throughout the Pyramid.

The domestic licence in Wales for the women's game was proposed as a 'soft' version for Tier 1 women's teams in 2018 (ahead of the 2019/20 season). Clubs were not rejected a licence if they did not meet the requirements but showed the intention of the introduction for the new system. The following season it was formalised with clubs needing to obtain the licence to play in Tier 1. The Tier 1 license has always mirrored the six sections of the UEFA licence; Youth Development, Personnel, Infrastructure, Finance, Legal and Social & Environmental Sustainability. It is anticipated that we shall continue to develop the licences following the same strategy, taking guidance from the UEFA requirements, while also ensuring that the criteria support the on-going development of the clubs in the areas that are recognised as key either by the teams themselves or the FAW through our research.

Based on the UEFA initiative all 55 UEFA members introduced similar schemes. The FAW Licensing system meets the minimum mandatory criteria, established by UEFA in their Regulations to ensure that common standards are consistently applied to all clubs taking part in European competitions and domestically, in the Cymru Premier and Adran Premier. The categories of criteria that clubs will have to meet are:

Sporting criteria
Social & Environmental Sustainability
Infrastructure criteria
Personnel criteria

Legal criteria
Financial criteria

Objectives

The objectives of the Club Licensing system and Club Monitoring process are:

To promote and improve sporting standards in National and European football.

Paramount to this, will be the development of Cymru Premier & Adran Premier Coaches and Managers and consequently, the Licensor will encourage and ensure that these individuals are accessing the best possible coaching courses to meet the Licensing Criteria. For the UEFA criteria in the men's game, they require the highest qualification, the UEFA Pro Licence and for the Tier 1 Licence, they must be on the UEFA 'A' Licence. In the women's game, the set criteria is a UEFA 'A' Licence for both UEFA competitions and the Adran Premier. With the UEFA Women's Licence requirements changing in two years to mandate that the Head Coach of the First squad requires a UEFA Pro Licence, we will work closely with clubs and our coach education department to achieve this goal.

This has been extended to Tier 2 & 3 of the Men's Welsh Football Pyramid and Tier 2 of the Women's Football Pyramid where additional criteria states that all clubs must have in place an individual that has at least started the UEFA 'B' Licence & UEFA 'C' Licence course respectively. By maintaining these high standards, we will ensure that the standard of coaching in the domestic game in Wales remains high.

Furthermore, the FAW has received an increase in solidarity payments from UEFA which is being invested into key licensing area's such as player medicals, infrastructure developments and youth development. The financial distribution of the UEFA solidarity payments has greatly enhanced clubs who do not participate in Europe, or go further than the qualifying rounds, so has helped to re-dress some of the financial differences for clubs currently in the Cymru Premier. Club Licensing acts as the assessment tool to ensure that clubs can comply with the requirements to be eligible for UEFA solidarity payments.

To ensure that youth players receive the best possible training and care.

The FAW has received a significant financial investment from UEFA in relation to its domestic academies. Each academi has to meet strict criteria, aimed at improving standards, to access these funds annually (through the UEFA Solidarity scheme). If managed correctly by the association and the clubs, its felt that this significant financial investment will have a positive effect on the league as a whole going-forward and will result in more quality, home-grown players being developed by clubs.

To develop the women's youth game.

The FAW has recently put in place structures at clubs who are predominantly male orientated to increase the number of girls playing at the club. This is set out in the men's Tier 1 Club Licensing requirements. For the 2027/28 licence, this has been changed from a B Criteria to a mandatory A Criteria, as all clubs are currently compliant with this requirement. Therefore, we want to continue to ensure clubs remain compliant in this important area. By working with the top men's clubs, they

will assist the FAW to achieve it's target of developing the number of female players and teams we have, due to the set up and infrastructure currently contained within the club.

We have also increased the requirements at Tier 1 within the women's game to mandate that any club applying for a women's Tier 1 Licence must have a minimum of two youth teams. The introduction of the Academi system will further drive standards. The most notable and significant changes in this area are:

- A requirement to have a UEFA B Licence coach for all U12-19 teams.
- UEFA C Licence coach for all U8-U11 teams.
- Youth Team Medic
- Head of Youth Development with a UEFA A Licence
- Goalkeeper Coach with the UEFA B GK Licence available to all youth teams.

To strengthen the financial and economic performance of clubs.

This becomes ever-more pertinent in the footballing world and the FAW must ensure that the financial transparency and fair play are of the highest priority in the National Game. The FAW has undergone a financial benchmarking study involved all 12 Cymru Premier clubs in the 2025/26 season. Audited accounts are requested for the men's game. In the women's game, audited accounts are required for qualification into Europe. For the domestic game, profit & loss accounts are submitted for review. These are then scrutinised by financial experts at the FAW and from financial experts on the relevant licensing First Instance Body and Appeals Body committees.

To ensure clubs home stadiums reflect the needs of spectators, players and officials and provide a safe environment.

The stadiums in the Cymru Premier continue to improve and all meet the FAW Tier 1 Licence. The FAW must continue to encourage and assist the clubs in reaching UEFA standard. We've displayed this passion to fulfil this area by providing significant funding to the home grounds of Caernarfon Town FC, Colwyn Bay FC & Denbigh Town FC that were previously not UEFA compliant. This funding was provided by the FAW to host the EURO U19 2026 tournament, with the main aim to create a legacy for these clubs to continue to use these high-quality facilities.

Furthermore, with the FAW Tier 2 & 3 Ground Criteria is now mandatory, it is hoped that the gap between stadiums at Tier 1 and Tier 2 can be bridged with the tangible benefits of these regulations already being seen at Tier 2 & 3 clubs throughout Wales. The FAW has shown its commitment to this in particular with the expansion of the Cymru Premier. Clubs who did not meet the Tier 1 Licensing criteria were provided funding through the Future Growth Fund and the Cymru Football Foundation to meet the criteria. All 6 clubs who finished in a promotion position were able to be promoted on sporting merit, as they had the financial support from the FAW to improve their facilities.

Most clubs in the Adran Premier are affiliated to a strong men's club, but we set a minimum standard of what is required from an infrastructure requirement to encourage more spectators to the female game. To ensure that there is a minimum standard met, we have infrastructure requirements in place, which are achievable for clubs who are not supported by a strong male club in Wales.

We also mandate that any club applying for a Tier 1 Licence in the men's or women's game must have a safety check performed by the Sports Ground Safety

Authority ("SGSA"). This partnership the SGSA has formed with the FAW has created strong links with clubs to ensure that stadiums are safe for all that use them, with a particular emphasis on spectator safety. During the 2026/27 season, the FAW will provide training to all safety & security officers on best practice for maintaining and managing a safe match day experience. Furthermore, club personnel will be trained by the FAW to assist with compliance with Martyn's Law due to come into force as a legislation during April 2027.

To enhance the administration at the club.

The FAW will introduce a new club licensing computer system to be used during the 2026/27 season to consider clubs on their 2027/2028 club licensing application. The aim of this system is to provide an easier platform for clubs to use and ensure that the licensing system is seamless. All communication will be provided through the system. The personnel section will ensure that all individuals are correctly registered and that clubs are getting up to date information on individuals coaching qualifications and DBS's. The infrastructure section will also provide live information to clubs on how they are progressing in this section.

Club are required to have skilled personnel within the club. The FAW assists in this process by providing training to these individuals to meet the high standards we require. With the increased criteria it is vital the FAW ensures that the relevant individuals at clubs have access to the relevant educational courses. Therefore, the FAW Club Licensing Administration will continue to ensure that educational courses, designed to 'up-skill' volunteers, are readily available by working with the relevant departments within the FAW to ensure these are put in place. This includes a UEFA / FAW led medical course for Sports Therapists / Physiotherapists at Tier 1 clubs in the men's & women's game. Furthermore, club volunteers can access information on the FAW's Dosbarth platform for guidance and training in volunteer led positions.

To review and analyse data received.

The club monitoring policy is an efficient way of benchmarking and providing data on Welsh clubs. The FAW will provide data submitted by clubs to UEFA to show where the FAW sits in comparison to other clubs around Europe. It is integral for Welsh football, as this data will allow the FAW to understand where it can improve to enhance its UEFA coefficient ranking. We will provide clubs with sufficient time to provide answers to any questions the FAW has. We will aim to continually improve the data that we request from clubs and provide feedback to clubs to improve on the process.

The FAW will commit to supporting clubs with the submission of data for club licensing and club monitoring. We will provide clubs with ample time to supply information and meet with clubs to assist them with this process. Following from feedback from Licence Applicants and Licensee's, the FAW will continue to provide detailed feedback to clubs on their applications.

To review the Club Licensing Regulations Annually

Clubs are sent a document outlining the criteria that they have to fulfil to take part in the UEFA club competitions and the Association in meeting those requirements will continue to support them with all Club Licensing and Club Monitoring matters. This will be amended as required, subject to UEFA approval. Clubs have also received the FAW Tier 1 Licensing Regulations to achieve the same. To ensure the continual

development of the Club Licensing process, the Regulations will be reviewed annually in consultation with all stakeholders involved with club licensing including the FAW's top management, Club Licensing Manager, Licence Applicants & Licensee's, criteria experts and Decision-Making Bodies.

It is our objective to ensure that all clubs are dealt with efficiently, timely and that all the relevant information they need is available in good time for them to make the necessary application.

Furthermore, the Football Association of Wales commits to comply with the requirements set out in the UEFA Club Licensing Quality Standard and will be assessed annually, against this standard, by an independent certification body. We will keep all stakeholders including staff fully informed of our programme through briefings and staff notices, as it develops, and will ensure that all stakeholders directly involved in the scheme are fully trained and aware of the tasks that they need to complete in order to ensure its success.

Resourcing

The FAW will ensure that the Club Licensing department is properly staffed to ensure that it can provide assistance to clubs and its Decision-Making Bodies to ensure smooth running of this process. The criteria experts of the FAW will also assist clubs with any part of their application that they require assistance with. Furthermore, the FAW will provide Decision-Making Bodies that will make decisions independently without prejudice and treat each application confidentially.

All clubs will be given access to the new Club Licensing GMS computer system to submit all the required information. This data will be treated confidentially in accordance with the FAW's Privacy Notice. Utilising the new Club Licensing GMS system will allow clubs to easily upload the documentation that are required for Club Licensing and they will be able to easily identify what is missing and what is required.

The FAW receives funding from UEFA to run the Club Licensing program and the FAW commits to invest this money back into clubs to assist with meeting the Club Licensing program. This funding is utilised to assist with the SGSA inspection to ensure safe facilities for spectators, providing medical training for personnel, assist with costs for medical questionnaire's, assist clubs with audited accounts cost, assist clubs with infrastructure maintenance such as floodlights, inspect facilities annually and provide education workshops for club personnel.

We commit to notify clubs of all changes with ample time and will give appropriate notice to clubs when a Regulation is updated. We will work with clubs to assist with compliance to the Regulations. Clubs must ensure they take a proactive approach to updates to the Regulations and work with the FAW to ensure compliance. Rules & Regulations will be available to view on the FAW's website and on the Club Licensing GMS system. They will also be sent to all clubs at the start of the Core Process via email.

We believe that this Licensing system forms a firm foundation for continually improving football for all the parties involved.

The Football Association of Wales is committed to continually improve the effectiveness of the Club Licensing and Club Monitoring Process. We look forward to

receiving your continued support for this activity and I will welcome any suggestions that you may wish to make.



Nick Lewis
Chief Legal & Compliance Officer
Football Association of Wales

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