

WFFC GRADING POLICY

REVISION 4 – SEPTEMBER 2024

Wentworth falls football club (WFFC, The Club) creates teams for each season based on this grading policy. The best way to make requests for team placement is to pre-register for the season here:

bit.ly/WFFC-next-season.

Our policy is designed to help our team formation committee make properly informed decisions about player placements for the upcoming season and covers not just their skill on the field, but also their own desired outcomes and attitude towards contributing to their team on and off the field.

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Introduction

Wentworth Falls Football Club has 2 main goals regarding player development:

1. To provide a safe, fun, and social environment for learning and playing football
2. To provide an opportunity for players to develop their skills and to provide a pathway to elite football clubs in a fashion that could lead to a career in football.

Up until Under 12s both goals are achieved through point number 1. Nepean Football Association (The Association, NFA) maintains a non-competitive stance up until the U11 age group to improve the chances of an enjoyable football experience for all younger players. This includes the Association's decision not to publish results in these age groups.

The Association does however track results in these age groups so that teams may be grouped with teams of similar ability, and clubs are required to nominate an overall team skill level for every team u8 and over during the nomination process for each season.

From the Under 12 age group and up NFA introduces a competitive scoring and league table system, with playoffs, promotions and relegations at the end of each season. The Association sees this as an appropriate age to introduce the competitive nature of adult football.

In all competitions NFA monitor results via the Dribl app and will undertake mid-season league reshuffles based on teams results (usually after 3 rounds and again at the mid-point of the season).

WFFC Team Formation Methodology

Since 2023 WFFC has utilised a team formation committee at the beginning of each season to place players in appropriate teams. This committee is comprised of committee members, coaches and volunteers who work together to consider players, parents' and coaches' requests for placements of players for the season. They also rely on information from grading sessions to finalise teams in competitive age groups with numbers to fill more than one team.

As children leave the discovery phase of football and enter the Skill Acquisition Phase (u10-u12) it is important for both their learning and enjoyment to be placed with players of similar ability. With this in mind the team formation committee may move players into new teams for their u10, u11 or u12 seasons to help them find the right balance of challenge and success. The club refers to this process as soft grading as the Team Formation Committee seeks guidance from coaches as to when this may be necessary. There are no formal grading sessions for these age groups.

From under 13 and above The Club will run grading sessions for all age groups when enrolled player numbers are sufficient for 2 or more teams. Aligning with our second goal for our player development we wish to offer players further opportunity to challenge their learning of the competitive game. From u13, children are moving from primary to high school and friendship groups are changing in a way that makes sense to mix players between teams within the club.

Placing players of similar ability together helps our coaches ensure that their sessions run at an appropriate level for all players.

This also aligns with the Football Federation Australia (FFA) delineation of the start of the Game Training phase (GTP) following the Skills Acquisition Phase (SAP). Whilst SAP is focussed on individual skill development the GTP focus is on Team play. As such the club feels it is obliged to place players in teams that specifically suit the levels at which they play to support the FFA goals for player development.

The club will strive to recruit enough players to nominate 2 teams for each age group u13 and above, in both male and female competitions. The ideal outcome is to field 1x competitive team squad and 1x social team

squad, that can support each other whilst still providing challenges appropriate to all player's skill level, as guided by the coaches.

In cases where there are not enough players to fill 2 complete teams. The club reserves its right to select the team and its nature by the process of Grading outlined here. The aim of the grading process is to provide each player with a fair and honest appraisal of their skill level and potential as a footballer and to guide them into teams which will suitably challenge their development, as well as provide them ongoing enjoyment of the game.

For all teams u10 and above the executive committee (with the guidance of the team formation committee) of the club has the final say on player placements. If there is no consensus it will come down to a vote by the executive committee.

THE WFFC GRADING PROCESS

The process is overseen by the coaching co-ordinator, with support from the team formation committee.

The aims of the grading process are:

- To appraise a player confidentially and objectively on their skill level and potential as a footballer and to guide them into teams which will suitably challenge their development, as well as provide them ongoing enjoyment of the game.
- To identify which division nomination might best suit each team to optimise the balance of challenge and enjoyment.

The grading panel should be made up of experienced footballers and team formation committee members from within the club. It should comprise at least 3 people, preferably none of whom are a coach of that age group.

The panel should consult with each coach during the grading session(s) but should exclude their influence from their decision-making process.

By excluding the age coaches from the final decision it removes potential political problems between parents and coaches.

All grading assessment information will remain private.

Non-competitive grading U10-U12

As players enter the U10 - U12 age groups, the club recognises the need to group them with teammates of similar ability for their development and enjoyment. The Non-competitive grading process is a collaborative effort between the Team Formation Committee and the coaches. It is not initiated by player or parent requests but rather guided by ongoing observations and assessments made during regular training sessions and games.

We do not run monitored grading sessions for these age group, but use the following process:

Coach Evaluation: Throughout the season, coaches continuously monitor the progress and development of players in their teams. They assess individual skills, understanding of the game, and how well players perform within the team context. This ongoing evaluation helps identify players who may benefit from a different team placement to better match their ability level.

Consultation with the Team Formation Committee: Coaches share their evaluations with the Team Formation Committee, discussing which players might be better suited to a different team. This collaborative discussion focuses on creating balanced teams where each player is appropriately challenged, ensuring they are placed in the best environment for their development.

Team Adjustments and Communication with Parents: If both the coach and the Team Formation Committee agree that a player would benefit from moving to a different team, the adjustment is made. The coach or a committee member will then communicate with the player's parents, explaining the reasons for the move and how it aligns with the player's development goals.

Grading Competitive age groups u13-u17

Activities should be run where possible on 2 consecutive weeknights as summer sport commitments may interfere with players ability to attend weekend sessions.

A minimum of 2 monitored grading sessions should be run for age groups with numbers for more than 1 team.

We ask these 2 questions to the player directly when they attend a grading session:

- Their preferred position
- Whether they prefer to play in a social team, a competitive team or either

Numbered grading bibs are to be used to gather objective feedback from the panel and provide anonymous suggestions to the coaches for choosing their team. These are assigned at the start of the session

Using preferred position information, they can be assigned a coloured bib which places them in a particular team for that evening, taking care to distribute positions evenly between the teams.

The grading session activities should include:

- Small 4v4 or 5v5 games.
- Some training exercises to demonstrate individual skill.
- A full field game.

The grading panel should take notes on all players during the session, using the evaluation sheet and using the numbered bibs to identify players.

These notes are provided to coaches who can draft a team from the anonymous bib numbers

Coaches team selections from anonymous bib numbers can then be matched to the actual players for submission to the team formation committee for approval.

If unable to attend the grading sessions, the panel will consider player allocation based on the players previous playing experience. This must be received in writing prior to the commencement of the first grading session. Please email coaching@wentworthfallsfc.com.au with player details and previous playing experience along with the reason for non-attendance.

Grading days and times will be on weeknights after school hours.

Registered players will be notified of the dates by email.

After the grading process

Prior to team nominations there should be a full sized 11v11 game organised to test the team allocations and to allow final movement of players between squads. This will usually happen during the WFFC Pre-season social game day.

How players should be assessed

Players shall be assessed on 2 main categories:

1. Their ability to execute the core footballing skills
2. Their on-field awareness and decision-making ability

In the GTP, a player which chooses the right skill but cannot execute it has a similar problem to a player that can execute skills perfectly but cannot select the appropriate skill to use in a game situation.

As such due consideration of category 2 should be given in regard to:

- general awareness and decisions made on the field (regardless of the execution)
- Communication.
- Positioning.
- Gamesmanship

Category 1 covers the following core skills, and each player should be assessed on the ability to execute the 4 core attacking skills (Ball Possession BP) skills:

- Striking the ball
- First touch
- Running with the ball
- 1v1

And the 4 core defensive skills (Ball Possession Opponent BPO)

- Tackling
- Pressing
- Marking
- Intercepting

The Grading assessment sheet is attached for reference at the end of this document.

In graded age groups where numbers allow only one complete team can be entered, the club may need to decide whether the focus is as a social team or as a competitive team, and as such select players on the basis of the ability of the majority as opposed to first in best dressed.

The club will make all possible efforts to assist players in finding a place outside of the club to play football if an appropriate team cannot be made at WFFC.

What To Expect

All Registered players in age groups with more than one team should attend at least one grading session. Players will be asked to nominate a preferred position and also if they are interested in playing in a high grade team, or a more social level team. If a player for whatever reason is unable to attend grading, then he/she will be placed in a team deemed appropriate by the Team Formation Committee.

Players wishing to be considered for Division 1 are requested to attend ALL grading sessions; this may involve independent grading from the rest of the age group. Any absences from grading by a player trialling for a place in Division 1 MUST be notified in writing via email to coaching@wentworthfallsfc.com.au. Note that absences may have an effect on the final placement of a player into a team.

Throughout attendance at the grading process, players are not permitted to wear any representative attire or any training attire that identifies them as belonging to a particular team. Note: This is consistent with FNSW Policy.

Please note that during any grading sessions parents are not permitted to instruct or approach their child, nor stand around the areas where the grading sessions are being conducted.

Player Requests

Players may request to play above their age group, in a specific team or with friends. Reasonable endeavours will be made to accommodate such requests. The Team Formation Committee must be notified in writing before grading commences.

If a group of players or team from a previous season wishes to play together, they must all request this via the season pre-registration form and the request must be received from EACH individual player and/or parent/guardian – no player or parent/guardian can make a request on behalf of another player. Such requests can be made between September and January via the season pre-registration form at bit.ly/WFFC-next-season.

If such a request is made, the following is to apply:

1. The Team Formation Committee will only consider placing a player in a lower division, another age group or specific team if it does not impact upon the team, division or age group for which the player would have played (for example leaving insufficient numbers to form a team).
2. Team balance (in terms of goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders and attackers).
3. The Team Formation Committee may refuse a player from playing above his/her age group or in a requested team if it is the opinion of the Team Formation Committee that it would be detrimental to the player's performance or development, or to the team's performance or development.
4. Players requesting to play above their age group do so on the clear understanding that the following year they may be required to return to their appropriate age group.
5. If the request is seen as detrimental to a player's performance or development, or to a team's performance or development, the Team Formation Committee may refuse the request.

Grievance procedure

If any player or parent is not satisfied with grading the player receives, they can make a submission in writing to the Team Formation Committee requesting a review of the player's grading, outlining why they think the grading is not correct. The Team Formation Committee will consider this submission in consultation with the Executive to make a final decision on whether or not to change the player's grading.

Should a player not accept this decision and decide to withdraw from WFFC, paid registration fees will be refunded, less a reasonable administration fee (to be determined prior to the commencement of each season's grading).

Grading Assessment Sheet

Sample Assessment sheet included next page.

