

COLLEGE RUGBY LEAGUE - COMPETITION RULES 2025/26

1. **APPLICABLE OPERATIONAL RULES**

- 1.1 College Rugby League (CRL) sits within tier five of the RFL competition structure. All teams participating in the CRL are bound by the RFL Operational Rules and associated policies for Tiers Four, Five, and Six (Operational Rules).

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

- 2.1 Entry into the College Rugby League competition is open to all colleges, sixth forms and training providers playing rugby league who meet the RFL mandatory safeguarding requirements.
- 2.2 Applications from new colleges must be submitted in writing to the Competition Officer by the date specified each year. Membership shall be granted to a college for one season only and all colleges must reapply for membership each year.
- 2.3 The annual subscription for membership of a structured league shall be £75 per team and £15 per cup entry. Non-heartland teams will be subject to a reduced £30 fee for league entry.
- 2.4 Subscription for membership of the League shall be reviewed annually and paid by 30th November each season. Any team not having paid its annual subscription by 30th November will not be allocated competitive fixtures for the remainder of the season until such fees are paid.
- 2.5 Each College will be required to ensure that the Volunteers listed below are appropriately qualified and registered on GameDay:

Role	Qualifications	Requirement (i.e., per team, per College, present at matches)
Coach (Licensed)	Level 2 Coaching Qualification Valid DBS Safeguarding and Protecting Children CoachRight Course relevant to age groups coached Grassroots Concussion in Sports Guidance – Online module UKAD Introduction to Clean Sport course (Recommended)	1 Per Team (Player ratio 1:16)
Club Welfare Officer	Safeguarding and Protecting Children Course Time to Listen Course Valid DBS UKAD Introduction to Clean Sport course (Recommended)	1 Per College
First Aider	HSE approved Emergency First Aid Qualification Grassroots Concussion in Sports Guidance – Online module Valid DBS	1 Per home team in attendance at each match

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3. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

- 3.1 The League competition tables shall be compiled by the RFL, the positions in which shall be determined by the number of competition points gained with points being awarded as follows: two points for each Match won; and one point for each Match drawn.
- 3.2 The team with the highest number of points shall be at the top of the league table and the team with the lowest shall be at the bottom. Where teams have an equal number of points their relative positions shall be determined by points difference so that the team having the greater points difference is placed above the team with the lesser points difference. The points difference is calculated by subtracting the points scored against the team from the points scored by the team. If that still leads to a tie, then the team with the greater points percentage during the Season will be placed in the higher position. The points percentage is calculated by dividing the number of points scored by a team by the number of points it concedes and multiplying by 100. If the positions are still equal, positions will be determined by the toss of a coin which shall be carried out at such time and place as the RFL shall direct and those teams concerned shall be entitled to witness the toss.
- 3.3 The notional scores in forfeited games shall be 24-0 and a points deduction of 1 point. The League and Teams will work to ensure, where possible games are played. 24-0 will only be used as a last resort.
- 3.4 If a team withdraws from the League, then the points from the teams remaining fixtures shall be awarded to their opponents in line with competition rule 3.3, until they have completed one fixture against all teams within their division. If a team completes more than one fixture against another team within their division, the same method will apply until they have completed two fixtures against all teams within their division.
- 3.5 If a team is expelled or suspended, its record will be expunged, irrespective of how many games that team has played.
- 3.6 The League will operate a top four play-off format for the Premier Division. The play-off format will be as follows: 1st v 4th and 2nd v 3rd with the highest placed team having home advantage in the semi-final.

3.7 Cup Fixtures

- 3.7.1 In accordance with Operational Rule B3:2:2 Cup ties will take precedence over League Matches.

4. START AND END DATE OF THE COMPETITION

- 4.1 The RFL shall determine the commencement date of its competition and the date upon which it shall cease, these dates will fit between the 1st September and 31st May in any year.

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5. **PLAYER REGISTRATIONS/ELIGIBILITY**

- 5.1 All players should be registered in accordance with the Operational Rules. There is no restriction on the maximum number of players allowed to register per team in the College League, however fifteen is the minimum number per team and scheduled fixtures will be refused until 15 players are registered.
- 5.2 New Players can be signed on 'on the day' using the GameDay system. Teams are responsible for ensuring that a player is eligible to play for them before allowing the player to play. A Competition Officer can be contacted on match day to check a player's eligibility.
- 5.3 All participants in the competition must be recorded on the Individualised Learning Record (ILR) by the institution. They must be on the ILR of the institution which is drawing down funding as a continuing student at the time of the match. Students on the ILR who are registered as completed, withdrawn, or transferred are not eligible to play.
- 5.4 All participants in this competition must be over 16 years of age at midnight on 31st August in the academic year of participation (birth date on or before 31st August 2009). The upper age limit for any participant in this competition is a birth date on or after 1st September 2006.
- 5.5 Any institution submitting false information or playing an ineligible player(s) may forfeit the match.
- 5.6 Professional players are eligible to play within the CRL Competition and there is no restriction on the number of these players that can register. There is however a restriction on the number of Professional players that a team may play on a match day. The current limit is 5 unless mutually agreed by both sides. The Competition Officer should be made aware of any such agreements prior to the fixture taking place. Professional players should be indicated on the team sheet by placing a 'P' next to the players' name.

6 **FIXTURES**

- 6.1 All games must be played as per the fixture list, or the points for such games forfeited, unless an alternative date mutually agreeable by both teams and the Competition Officer can be sought. Any team wishing to rearrange a fixture must consult their opponents, agree a new date, and submit the request to the Competition Officer. If teams cannot agree a new date within 14 days of the original postponement, then the competition officer will issue a new date for the fixture. If the fixture is not played as instructed by the competition officer, the points will be awarded to the non-offending team.
- 6.2 Fixtures within the Regional Leagues (those outside of the Premier Division) are subject to greater flexibility. The League and teams will work to ensure, where possible, games are played. The awarding of games will only be used as a last resort.
- 6.3 Any team desiring to arrange a friendly must seek permission from the Competition Officer. No friendly fixtures shall be arranged on a League fixture date without prior approval of the Competition Officer.
- 6.4 Teams must accept fixtures given at seven days' notice by the Competition Officer.

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- 6.5 Any team failing to play a fixture on a scheduled date will be made to play the reverse fixture, if it has not already been played or forfeited, on their opponents' ground.
- 6.6 Any team failing to fulfil a fixture must pay reasonable expenses to the non-offending team, as determined by the RFL. This may include the referee's full fee and expenses.
- 6.7 If a College running two or more teams is unable to raise a team on any particular day, then the highest ranked team fixture must be played.

7 MATCH DAY OPERATIONS

- 7.1 All games, unless there is mutual agreement between competing teams to the contrary, are to be organised and staged on Wednesday afternoons with a kick-off time scheduled for 2.00pm. Teams are encouraged to accommodate any requests by their opposition for alternative dates and kick off times to ensure games take place.
- 7.2 To maintain the continuity of the playing programme the Competition Officer shall be empowered, if necessary, to bring forward to an earlier date, fixtures scheduled for later in the season.

8 Team Sizes

- 8.1 A maximum of 17 players may be named for each side taking part in a fixture including league and cup fixtures, play-off games and finals. The maximum number of players can be increased to 20 subject to the agreement of the opposition. If agreement is not sought or permitted with opponents, then a maximum of 17 players may be named. For any fixture, this must be confirmed by Tuesday evening prior to the game with the appointed referee and Competition Officer.
- 8.2 Within the Regional Leagues (those outside of the Premier Division) there are no restrictions on team sizes, both maximum and minimum. Team sizes should be discussed and agreed between opposing teams in advance of the game. Teams are encouraged to be accommodating to ensure games take place wherever possible.
- 8.3 Clubs are encouraged (not required) to match team sizes with their opposition to increase the likelihood of games taking place. For example, if a team only travels with 10 players, the opposing team also starts with 10 players on the pitch. Team sizes should be discussed and agreed between opposing teams in advance of the game.
- 8.4 A maximum of 5 professional players can be involved in any match day squad unless mutually agreed by both sides. The Competition Officer should be made aware of any such agreements prior to the fixture taking place. Any agreement to increase the number beyond 5 should be agreed by 5.00pm on the Monday before the fixture at the latest.

9 Contacting Opponents and Kit Obligations

- 9.1 In accordance with the Operational Rules it is the responsibility of the home College, during the week preceding a game, to contact both its opponents and the relevant Match Officials regarding team colours and ground directions. For the Premier Division this should be done no later than the Friday preceding the Wednesday fixture. For all other divisions this should

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be done by no later than 5pm on the Monday preceding the Wednesday fixture. Away teams should acknowledge any correspondence received and confirm their intention to travel, no later than 24 hours before the scheduled kick off time.

- 9.2 In the event there is a clash of colours the away team must wear an alternative strip.

10 Medical Requirements

- 10.1 It is the requirement of each home team to ensure that a First Aider is in attendance at each game. In the event that there is no first aider then the match official will not permit a game to take place.
- 10.2 First aiders should be listed on the team sheet and are required to register on the GameDay system as a volunteer.
- 10.3 In the event a player sustains an injury to the head or displays signs or symptoms of concussion, the Match Official will stop the game and ask for the first aider to attend to them. If the first aider suspects concussion the player **MUST** be removed from the field of play and remain off the field of play. If the player refuses to follow the first aider's advice, then the Match Officials can hold up play until the player follows the instruction of the first aider. Advice for managing concussion can be found [HERE](#). The RFL is supportive of and follows the SRA concussion guidance – please read through the guidance in full [HERE](#) and ensure they are applied to matches and training at all times.
- 10.4 In the event there is a serious injury or concussion at a Match this must be reported. The relevant team must ensure the [serious injury form](#) is completed. It is imperative that any head injuries or serious injuries of any sort are reported as this information must be provided to the insurers.

11 Team Sheet

- 11.1 Official team sheets must be completed correctly before the commencement of matches and shall be signed by a recognised official from each College and the Match Official.
- 11.2 Completed team sheets should include the full forename and surname (no initials), of all participants and must be sent by the home team to competitions@rfl.co.uk within 48 hours following the completion of the game. Details of the man of the match from both the participating teams must also be included.
- 11.3 It is the responsibility of both teams to ensure that the team sheet information is entered on the GameDay system within 48 hours following the completion of the game.
- 11.4 Professional players should be indicated on the team sheet by placing a 'P' next to the players' name.

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12 Reporting Results

- 12.1 The home team, in consultation with the Match Official and designated officer from the opposition, must agree the result immediately on completion of the game and enter the result on GameDay within 24 hours.

13 Abandonment of Games

- 13.1 If a game is abandoned with more than three-quarters of the playing time elapsed, the result shall stand unless otherwise determined by the RFL. If less than three-quarters of the playing time has elapsed the RFL, at its sole discretion, may order a game to be re-played.

14 Postponements

- 14.1 In the event of the home team suspecting that its ground will not be fit for play owing to adverse weather conditions or other cause, the home team must immediately call a Match Official on the approved list recognised by the RFL to carry out a ground inspection. If the Match Official states the ground is not fit for play, and in their opinion, there is no chance of it being so before the scheduled kick off, then that decision must be communicated immediately to the visiting team, appointed Match Official and the Competition Officer.
- 14.2 All postponements must be notified to the Competition Officer by 12 noon on a Wednesday.
- 14.3 In the case of both a no-fault or mutually agreed postponement, if teams cannot agree a new date within 14 days of the original postponement, then the Competition Officer will issue a new date for the fixture.

15 DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSIONS AND FINES

- 15.1 An RFL discipline panel is in place to deal with all discipline matters arising. The disciplinary panel shall have the full power to expel, suspend and/or fine any team, player, official or other person, subject to the Operational Rules, found guilty of misconduct and/or breach of these rules and/or breach of the Operational Rules and to order them to meet any costs incurred.
- 15.2 A written report of a Match Official on the misconduct of any team, player or official must be sent via email to the Competition Officer with a copy to the offending team for receipt inside 48 hours from the conclusion of the game.
- 15.3 Reports of brawling – defined as three or more players involved - should be sent via email by the Match Official, for receipt within 48 hours of a game's conclusion, to the Competition Officer. Separate copies of the report will then be forwarded to the teams concerned.
- 15.4 Any team which does not receive, within 48 hours, a report outlining a dismissal or brawl having occurred should contact the Competition Officer immediately. The failure of a team to receive a written report will not prevent action being dealt by the relevant discipline committee.
- 15.5 Unedited video evidence shall be an accepted method through which to defend or confirm the alleged actions that have been reported to the committee by a Match Official.

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15.6 A player's suspension will commence with immediate effect, and a suspended player is prohibited from participating in any Rugby League game until the following conditions are met:

- Any imposed fines are fully paid as per rule 15.8.
- The suspension is served in full.
- The Notification of Games Served Form is completed, submitted to, and approved by the Competition Officer.

Failure to comply with this rule will result in a minimum fine of £100 for the player or club. Additionally, the offending player may face further suspension and will remain ineligible to play until all fines are paid.

If a club fields a suspended player and wins the game, any competition points gained will be automatically forfeited.

The RFL reserves the right to impose further sanctions if deemed appropriate. These may include suspending or expelling the offending club from the competition.

15.7 All organised competition games provided that they were arranged prior to the player's offence may be counted towards his list of suspended games.

15.8 All fines, payable to the RFL must be settled within 28 days and must be forwarded to the Competition Officer. Failure to meet this obligation shall result in the fine being doubled automatically. If a further seven days elapse without receipt of payment, then the club's fixtures will be suspended.

15.9 The RFL will refer to its own internal policy in relation to citation, when dealing with any requests to review incidents of alleged misconduct that were not addressed by the Match Official during the game.

16 APPEALS

16.1 All appeals against disciplinary sanctions are to be dealt with by an independent RFL appointed panel.

16.2 If a player wishes to appeal against a decision they shall not be permitted to play in any Match until their appeal has been heard.

16.3 Clubs wishing to appeal a decision must do so within 7 days of the decision being issued. The appeal must include:

- A £40.00 fee, payable to the "RFL"; and
- A written letter explaining the grounds for the appeal.

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Both the fee and the letter must be submitted to the Competition Officer within the specified time frame.

- 16.4 The only grounds for appeal are that the original Disciplinary Panel:
- i) came to a decision to which no reasonable body could have come; or
 - ii) failed to act fairly in a procedural sense; or
 - iii) the sanction imposed was so excessive or lenient as to be unreasonable.
- 16.5 The Notice of Appeal must include any fresh evidence the Appellant wishes to introduce. The Appellant must also provide reasons why this evidence is relevant, credible, and was unavailable at the original hearing. Fresh evidence will only be admitted with the permission of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel. Permission will generally only be granted if the evidence meets the outlined criteria and is submitted alongside the Notice of Appeal.
- 16.6 An appeal shall be heard by way of review and shall not be a de novo hearing.
- 16.7 The Disciplinary Appeals Panel shall have all the same powers as the Disciplinary Panel in relation to evidence, experts, witnesses and conduct of proceedings, as well as the power to:
- (a) dismiss the appeal.
 - (b) quash a sanction or finding.
 - (c) remit the matter for rehearing.
 - (d) substitute an alternative finding or sanction.
 - (e) reduce or increase the original sanction; or
 - (f) make such orders as it considers appropriate
- Fresh evidence may only be presented to the Disciplinary Appeals Panel with its permission.
- 16.8 No member of the Discipline Panel is actively involved in a decision taken at the initial hearing other than the Competition Officer - who has no voting rights - shall be permitted to adjudicate on matters that will be the subject of appeal.