

AGE DISPENSATION PROCEDURE

BACKGROUND

The starting policy position is that a player may play in the age group he/she is turning in the relevant calendar year **and** in the age group one year above. For example, a player turning 15 in the relevant calendar year (1 January – 31 December) is eligible to play in the Under 15 age group and the Under 16 age group.

IS DISPENSATION REQUIRED TO MOVE WITHIN ELIGIBLE GRADES?

No.

In the above example, no dispensation is required for the player turning 15 to play in the Under 16 age group.

In exceptional circumstances, a competition manager (or other person designated by the State Union) may, based on the results of the assessment process contained within these procedures and after consultation with the player and their parent/guardian, seek the approval from the Head of Game Development of the relevant State or Territory Union (or another person nominated by the CEO of the State or Territory Union) to mandate that a player move within their eligible grades i.e. move an Under 15 player to the Under 16 age group. This discretion is only to be exercised in circumstances where the player’s participation in their current or preferred age grade is deemed to present a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants.

WITH DISPENSATION – WHERE CAN A PLAYER PLAY?

The Australian Rugby Participation Policy caters for dispensation outside the eligible grades as follows:

“a player’s physical development in conjunction with their ability and/or experience may be such that he or she may be allowed to participate in an age grade competition that is one year above or one year below their eligible age grades”.

For example, the player turning 15 in the relevant calendar year (1 January – 31 December) who is already eligible to play in the Under 15 age group and the Under 16 age group, may receive dispensation to be able to participate in the Under 14 age group or Under 17 age group.

A player turning 19 in the relevant calendar year (1 January – 31 December) may receive dispensation to play in an Under 18 competition.

In exceptional circumstances - this may include where competitions are set in two-year age group gaps (i.e. Under 12, Under 14, Under 16 etc.) - a competition manager (or other person designated by the State or Territory Union) may, based on the results of the assessment process contained within these procedures and after consultation with the player and their parent/guardian, seek the approval from the Head of Game Development of the relevant State or Territory Union (or another person nominated by the CEO of the State or Territory Union) to mandate that a player move outside their eligible grades i.e. move an Under 15 player to the Under 17 age group or Under 14 age group. This discretion is only to be exercised in circumstances where the player’s participation in their current or preferred age grade is deemed to present a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This procedure is applicable to all registered players participating or wishing to participate in age grade competitions between Under 8 and Under 18 except for the non-contact form of Rugby, VIVA7s.

Each State or Territory Union must designate an appropriate person(s) to apply this procedure within a competition. The competition manager will typically be the person responsible; however, the State or Territory Union may nominate an alternate person and/or convene an advisory panel or group of subject matter experts to provide recommendations and/or make decisions in the application of this procedure.

It is the responsibility of all Coaches, Club Officials, Unions and Affiliates and Parents / Guardians to ensure that Rugby is as safe, fair and inclusive as possible. Primary regard must be given to the Australian Rugby Safety Policy.

STEP BY STEP PROCEDURES

| STEP | DESCRIPTION OF ACTION | RESPONSIBLE |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | <p>The starting point for activating this Age Dispensation Procedure should be the physical development of the player, relative to their eligible age grades.</p> <p>The below process may be instigated via any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a request for assessment from a player who is seeking dispensation (or their parent / guardian); OR • a player falling outside standard weight and, if applicable, height guidelines as published by the ARU, or where no guidelines are published by the ARU, the relevant Union; OR • observations of an accredited coach; OR • a request made to the competition manager for an assessment of a player by a Club / School Official; OR • at the discretion of the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative). | <p>Accredited Coach / Club or School Official / Parent or Guardian / Competition Manager</p> |
| 2 | <p>Where a player is requesting dispensation, the Club / School will provide the player (or their parent / guardian) with the Age Dispensation Consent Form and Dispensation Schedule A . Please note: step 6 below where the player proposes to play in the <u>Front Row</u> (prop or hooker).</p> | <p>Club / School</p> |
| 3 | <p>The Age Dispensation Consent Form is completed and provided to the competition manager who will then provide the Dispensation Schedule A to the Club / School for the assessment process to be undertaken.</p> <p>Where the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) instigates the process, they will simply provide the Schedule A to the Club/School for assessment.</p> | <p>Parent / Guardian</p> |

| STEP | DESCRIPTION OF ACTION | RESPONSIBLE |
|------|---|---------------------------|
| 4 | A qualified Assessing Coach is designated by the Club/School to assess the physical development, ability and / or experience of the player relative to the proposed playing age group. An Assessing Coach must hold a minimum Level 2 Accreditation and current Smart Rugby. | Club / School |
| 5 | Assessment is undertaken with prescribed field based tests and Rugby match assessment. | Qualified Assessing Coach |
| 6 | <p>Dispensation Schedule A is completed by the assessing coach and returned to the Club / School with a recommendation of the appropriate age grade for the participant.</p> <p>Please Note: Players who participate <u>above</u> their eligible age grades and play in the <u>Front Row</u> (prop or hooker) must also apply for approval from the ARU prior to participation in rugby, as outlined in Schedule B* - Exception for Front Row.</p> <p><i>*Not required for Sevens Rugby.</i></p> | Qualified Assessing Coach |
| 7 | Dispensation Schedule A (and Schedule B if required) along with the Age Dispensation Consent Form are forwarded to the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative). | Club / School |
| 8 | <p>The competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) will review the assessment and either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accept or decline the Age Dispensation application; OR • request independent assessment in line with the Australian Rugby Safety Policy and the Australian Rugby Participation Policy before making any decision; OR • make a recommendation to the player (or their parent/guardian) as to the appropriate age grade for that player based on the initial assessment or the subsequent independent assessment; OR • make a recommendation to the Head of Game Development of the relevant State Union (or another person nominated by the CEO of the Union) that a player be mandated to participate in a specific age group (either within or outside the player’s eligible age grades) based on the original assessment or the subsequent independent assessment where their participation presents a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants. | Competition Manager |

| STEP | DESCRIPTION OF ACTION | RESPONSIBLE |
|------|--|--|
| 9 | Where the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) makes a recommendation to the Head of Game Development of the relevant State or Territory Union (or another person nominated by the CEO of the State/Territory Union) that a player be mandated to move age grades, the player and their parent/guardian must be consulted as to the reasons for the recommendation. | Competition Manager/State Union Head of Game Development |
| 10 | The Head of Game Development (or another person nominated by the CEO of the State or Territory Union) may, in exceptional circumstances, mandate that a player participate in a specific age group (either within or outside the player’s eligible age grades) where their participation in their current or preferred age grade is deemed to present a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants. | State Union Head of Game Development (or another person nominated by the CEO of the Union) |
| 11 | Appropriate changes are made in the Competition Management System (Rugby Link) to enable participation in the approved age grade. This may include the remittance / refund of any conversion fees applicable to the player or their Parent / Guardian | Competition Manager |
| 12 | The Club / School is notified as well as the Parent / Guardian. | Competition Manager |

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Coaches and Club / School officials and Unions have a duty of care and are bound by this Policy and the Australian Rugby Safety Policy to ensure that players are playing in the appropriate age grade competition based on the player’s physical development in conjunction with their ability and / or experience.
- It is an obligation under the Australian Rugby Code of Conduct for all participants to comply with the Australian Rugby Participation and its related policies and guidelines – which includes this Age Dispensation Procedure. Intentional or reckless disregard for these policies and procedures **may result in disciplinary action pursuant to the Australian Rugby Code of Conduct or the Australian Rugby Member Protection Policy.**
- Any grievance by players (or their parents/guardians) regarding decisions made under this Age Dispensation Procedure must be dealt with pursuant to the grievance procedure of the relevant Union with jurisdiction for the competition.
- The ARU has the discretion to review any decision made in accordance with this Age Dispensation Procedure and/or conduct an investigation as appropriate.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Australian Rugby Code of Conduct
- Age Dispensation Consent Form
- Dispensation Schedule A and Schedule B
- Australian Rugby Safety Policy
- Australian Rugby Participation Policy
- Australian Rugby Member Protection Policy
- [Junior Age Grade/Senior Rugby Guidelines Table](#)

AGE DISPENSATION - CONSENT FORM

COMPLETED FORM TO BE SUBMITTED TO YOUR COMPETITION MANAGER OR STATE / TERRITORY UNION DESIGNATE

PLAYER (please print clearly)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Name: | Rugby Link No. | | |
| Club/School: | Competition/State: | | |
| Date of Birth: | Actual Age Grade: | | (i.e. U12s, U16s, Senior Rugby) |
| Current Position: | Requested Age Grade: | | (i.e. U14s, U15s) |
| Contact No. | E-mail: | | |

PARENT / LEGAL GUARDIAN

I confirm that:

- I am a parent or legal guardian of the abovementioned player;
- I have been provided with a copy of the Australian Rugby Safety Policy, Australian Rugby Participation Policy as well as the Age Dispensation Procedure and Age Dispensation Consent Form including Dispensation Schedules A & B;
- It has been explained to me that the risk of injury may be increased by the player playing in an age grade that differs from the player's actual age or recommended age grade; and
- I understand that rugby is a contact sport and, like all contact sports, players are exposed to risk of injury. I also understand that risk of injury may be increased by the player playing in an age grade that differs from the player's actual age or recommended age grade. In addition to understanding these risks, I also agree, to the extent permitted by law, to waive my right to bring any claim for liability against any participant (including players, coaches, volunteers and administrators) and release every such participant from all liability that may be incurred in connection with the player's participation in the requested or recommended age grade.

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Name: | Signature: | Date: |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|

COMPETITION MANAGER OR STATE / TERRITORY UNION DESIGNATE

| | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Schedule A Attached | YES | NO | (please circle) |
| Schedule B Attached | YES | NO | (please circle) |
| Competition appointed independent coach assessment required: | YES | NO | |
| Independent Coach Assessment Approval of Age Dispensation | YES | NO | N/A |

Notes on decision / restrictions with respect to this Age Dispensation including recommended age grade (if applicable):

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Approved Age Grade: | |
|----------------------------|--|

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Name: | Signature: | Date: |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|

DISPENSATION FORM - Schedule A

This Dispensation Form is to be completed as required via the following Dispensation Procedures:
Age, Senior Rugby, Mixed Gender, Disability and Gender Identification Dispensation Procedures

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Player Name: | | Dispensation Type: | | |
| Level of Experience: | The player's level of experience allows the player to compete safely with players in the proposed competition: | | | |
| | Enter the number of years played: | | | |
| | Was the player granted Dispensation the previous season (please circle): | | YES | NO |
| | Enter the number of years of representative experience: | | | |
| | Outline the representative level of experience below: [e.g. club/school and year(s) played] | | | |
| Physical Development: | The player's level of physical development allows the player to compete safely with players in the proposed competition | | | |
| | Proposed Playing Position(s): | | | |
| | Weight (kg): | | | |
| | Height (cm): | | | |
| | Is the player's physical development appropriate to positions played and level of competition? (Please circle): | | YES | NO |
| Skill Development: | The player's level of skill development allows the player to compete safely with players in the proposed competition (please circle) | | | |
| | Catch & Pass: | YES | NO | |
| | Track to Tackle competency: | YES | NO | |
| | Tackle competency: | YES | NO | |
| | Tackle Contest competency: | YES | NO | |
| | Set Piece (Scrum / Lineout): | YES | NO | N/A |
| | Assessment occurred during: | Match | Training | Both |
| | <i>Note: It is strongly desirable that assessment take place both during training and under match conditions. If a coach identifies the player as N/A in Set Piece, then that player cannot fulfil a functional role in a scrum or lineout in the competition to which this application is made.</i> | | | |
| Standard of Competition: | Does the standard of competition allow the player to compete safely with players in the proposed competition? | | YES | NO |
| Safety of Participant(s): | If the player remains in their current grade, do they pose a significant safety risk to themselves or others? | | YES | NO |

ASSESSING COACH

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Name: | MyRugby No. | | |
| Contact No. | E-mail: | | |
| Coaching Accreditation: | Level [1] [2] [3] [4] please circle | Smart Rugby Accreditation: | Expiry _____ |
| | Expiry _____ | | Expiry _____ |

In my opinion, the player's physical development, ability and/or experience is sufficiently high that the player can compete safely with players in the proposed grade. I have undertaken this assessment by viewing this player in training and /or match conditions. I have completed the Schedule A (and Schedule B if required) with the full knowledge of the ARU Safety Policy and Participation Policy and my responsibilities under those policies. I have explained to the player and his/her parent or guardian that the player participating against players of differing age / gender to the player and this may involve an increased level of injury risk.

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Name: | Signature: | Date: |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|

Schedule B - Exception for Front Row (prop or hooker)

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Considerations:</p> | <p>In assessing the suitability of a player to participate in the position of Front Row (prop or hooker) outside their Eligible Grades, the following factors will be considered and addressed in the Submission Form.</p> <p>(i) skill level, experience and the level of coaching received –</p> <p><i>Player experience in the Front Row (prop or hooker)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of years' experience playing in front row ➤ Did you play in the front row last year? ➤ If you missed a game through injury last year please identify the injured area (e.g. R. Shoulder, L. Knee or neck etc.) <p><i>Level of coaching received</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What Level of coaching accreditation does your current coach have? ➤ Have you received any specialist front row coaching in the last 2 years? If Yes, please outline coaching received, identify the coach who provided this coaching, and outline their coaching accreditation and experience? <p>(ii) strength –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you undertake a regular strength program? If Yes, how many times a week do you complete strength training, identify who provided the program and their qualifications, and provide the strength program that you have completed over the past 4 weeks. ➤ Was your strength and conditioning program developed by a qualified Strength and Conditioning Coach? ➤ How long have you been doing regular strength training? (ie months/years) <p>In addition to the above information, an objective assessment of body structure may also be required if deemed appropriate.</p> <p>(iii) body structure –</p> <p>If your skill/experience and strength levels outlined above have been considered adequate, the ARU may request additional information in the form of CT scans or MRI scans, prior to approving an exception for Front Row.</p> <p>A referral for these investigations will be posted to you if appropriate. The costs of these investigations must be borne by the athlete.</p> |
| <p>Submission Forms can be sent to:</p> | <p>Australian Rugby Union Fax: (02) 8005 5681; or E-mail: communityrugby@rugby.com.au</p> |
| <p>Approvals</p> | <p>Approvals will be granted on a case by case basis.</p> |

SCHEDULE B – EXCEPTION FOR FRONT ROW SUBMISSION FORM

COMPLETED SUBMISSION FORM, ATTACHMENTS AND CONSENT FORM TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE ARU

Fax: (02) 8005 5681 or e-mail communityrugby@rugby.com.au

| | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| PLAYER (please print clearly) | | | |
| Players Name: | | Club/School: | |
| Phone: | | E-mail: | |
| Rugby Link No. | | Date of Birth: | |
| 1. Please enter the number of years played in front row | | | |
| 2. Outline level of rugby played in front row (e.g. club/school, representative, etc. and year played) | | | |
| | | | |
| 3. Did you play in the front row last year? (please circle) | | YES | NO |
| 4. If No, please state why: | | | |
| 5. Did you miss any games due to injury in the last year? (please circle) | | YES | NO |
| 6. If Yes, how many games were missed due to injury last year? | | | Missed Games |
| List injuries causing a missed games: | | | |
| ASSESSING COACH | | | |
| <i>The assessing coach must be the same coach as in Schedule A. The assessing coach <u>must</u> hold the minimum required Coach accreditation, current Smart Rugby qualification and assess the player against the following considerations. If the answer is NO to any of these considerations, then the player shall NOT be considered capable of competing safely with players in the proposed competition at the time of this assessment. Subsequent assessments <u>may</u> take place if the coach believes competency has been gained to the considerations below by the player.</i> | | | |
| Have you received any specialised front row coaching in the last two seasons? (please circle) | | YES | NO |
| If Yes, specify details (e.g. what coaching, identify the coach, level of coaching accreditation & experience, etc.) | | | |
| | | | |
| Does the player's level of skill development allow the player to compete safely in the front row with players in the proposed age grade competition | | YES | NO |
| Does the standard of competition allow the player to compete safely in the front row with players in the proposed age grade competition? | | YES | NO |
| <i>I declare that the information provided and attached is true and correct.</i> | | | |
| Name: | | Signature: | Date: |
| ASSESSING STRENGTH & CONDITIONING COACH | | | |
| <i>The assessing S&C coach <u>must</u> hold a minimum qualification of ASCA Level 1 (or equivalent). If the answer is NO to any of these considerations, then the player shall NOT be considered capable of competing safely with players in the proposed competition at the time of this assessment. Subsequent assessments <u>may</u> take place if the coach believes competency has been gained to the considerations below by the player.</i> | | | |
| Name: | | Contact No. | |
| Qualifications/ Accreditation: | | E-mail: | |
| Does the player undertake a regular (> 2/week) strength program? (please circle) | | YES | NO |
| If Yes, how many times a week does the player complete strength training? | | | Per week |
| How many years has the player been completing regular strength program? | | Yrs | Mths |
| Please attach a copy of the player's current S&C program (with S&C coach sign off) | | | |