

Age Grade Playing Calendar Pilot 2019-20



In the run-up to the new season, we kick off a renewed drive to get the Age Grade game working more closely as one. The aim is to provide a quality experience across all clubs, schools, colleges, universities and rep rugby that retains more age grade players and ultimately improves the numbers transitioning into adult rugby.

Developing the Age Grade Playing Calendar is one of the vehicles through which we can join everyone more closely together. We appreciate the feedback we receive about the Calendar and have been working on the detail of this over recent months with our partners across the Age Grade game. Much of the feedback focusses on post-Christmas, when many club competitions are in full swing, representative and pathway activity is scheduled, schools competitions are reaching latter stages and the schools sevens season gets underway.

Players playing in multiple environments continue to be under pressure to play and all competition organisers are looking for increased flexibility. In addition, there are many players who only play in one environment be that club, school or college whose participation we should also be maximising. Based on some of the feedback we want to try and further open up opportunities for this significant group in particular.

As a consequence we will for season 2019-20 be running a **Pilot in the second half of the season** (from 1st January to 10th May 2020). This will make the windows in the Age Grade Playing Calendar at U12 to U16 **“priority” windows**. Most major competitions are set already in the approved Calendars but for those that are more locally run (usually by clubs or schools/colleges themselves) the pilot means they can be scheduled in either window. But if a player is in multiple environments (club, school, college, rep rugby) in **orange weeks they should prioritise their club** and in **blue weeks they should prioritise their school/college**; and those selected for pathway and rep rugby on those **identified calendar dates, should prioritise that**.

It is incumbent on all parties to discuss what is best for each individual player and resolve any conflict locally, remembering the long-term aim to retain their participation through to adult rugby and the final choice remains with the player and parent as to their priority. This is no different from what the calendar requires already and the pilot approach makes the collaborative conversations even more crucial.

Clearly it is common sense to still organise activities in the appropriate weeks to maximise availabilities and avoid conflicts, however this will allow some flexibility and potentially benefit the group mentioned above. In addition, organisers will need to be aware that if they are scheduling competitions out of window they should **communicate this to all entrants well in advance** and understand they will not have access to some players who are involved in other environments.

The regulation for CBs to approve all competitions still remains and must be followed as is the case now; it is still advantageous to try to minimise clashes but this pilot will allow flexibility. There will be even **greater expectation for the parties involved in Age Grade Rugby to work together** to implement this. If this proves successful then we could role this out across the whole season in 2020-21, if it causes problems we will have to look at less flexible solutions.

We will update on implementation with county bodies at the summer Age Grade sessions. Please contact AgeGradeRugby@rfu.com if you have any feedback or queries.

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Tracy Edmundson – RFU Age Grade Clubs Advisory Group Chair

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David Elstone – Headmasters’ & Headmistresses’ Conference Sports Committee Chair

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