



AGE GRADE DISPENSATION PROCEDURE

OVERVIEW

This procedure provides a process for players to move between Age Grades as per the Rugby Australia [Participation Policy](#) and as outlined in the [Junior Age Grade / Senior Rugby Guidelines Table](#).

The [Age Grade Dispensation Flowchart](#) depicts how the steps of the procedure are to be undertaken:

STARTING POLICY POSITION

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 AGE GRADES?

No. Using the above example, no dispensation would be required for the player turning 15 to play in the Under 16 age group.

WITH DISPENSATION – WHERE CAN A PLAYER PLAY?

The Rugby Australia Participation Policy provides for dispensation outside the eligible age 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, a player turning 15 in the relevant calendar year 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 may receive dispensation to play in an Under 18 competition.

WHEN IS AN ASSESSMENT MANDATORY?

Rugby Australia has published its ‘Size for Age’ Guidelines that contain mandatory assessment guidelines for male and female age grade players. These guidelines require that players in the age groups **Under 10 to Under 15** that fall either above or below height and weight parameters for each age group must undertake an assessment by an **Independent Qualified Assessing Coach** to determine the child’s appropriate age grade under this procedure.

An Independent Qualified Assessing Coach must hold a minimum Level 2 Coach Accreditation, current Smart Rugby qualification and have completed the Assessing Coach Module within the [Rugby Learning Centre](#).





The following definition of an Independent Coach outlines the minimum criteria that must be met to conduct an official player assessment. Member Unions and Competition Managers are permitted to add criteria that is appropriate for their jurisdiction.

A Qualified Assessing Coach is defined as being Independent if they are not registered to the same Club or School as the player being assessed.

OR

In the event a Qualified Assessing Coach is registered with the same Club or School as the player being assessed they must meet the following criteria to be defined as Independent.

- *Do not coach the specific age-grade of the player being assessed.*
- *Do not coach the specific age-grade that the player participated in the previous season, if applicable.*
- *Do not coach the specific age-grade that the player wishes to participate in, if applicable.*

WILL PLAYERS BE REQUIRED TO MOVE AGE GRADES?

Where a player falls outside the 'Size for Age' guidelines having undergone an assessment that has taken into consideration the maturity, physical fitness, skill and/or experience of the player and the independent assessing coach recommends a specific age grade, the competition manager would need compelling justification to disagree with the recommendation. Furthermore, a player may be required to move age grades under the Age Dispensation Procedure if, in exceptional circumstances, the assessing coach deems a player a significant safety risk to themselves or others if they remain in their actual age grade.

A competition manager (or other person designated by the State or Territory Union) may, based on the results of the assessment process 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 require that a player must move either:

- within their eligible age grades i.e. move an Under 15 player to the Under 16 age grade; OR
- outside their eligible age grades i.e. move an Under 15 player to the Under 17 age grade or Under 14 age grade.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This procedure applies to all registered players participating or wishing to participate in age grade competitions between Under 8 and Under 18 except for non-contact Rugby or Touch7s.

Each State or Territory Union must designate an appropriate person(s) to administer the application of this procedure within their competitions. Whilst the competition manager will typically be the person responsible, the State or Territory Union may however nominate another person and/or convene an advisory panel or group of individuals that have the necessary expertise to provide recommendations and/or make decisions on the application of this procedure.

Please note that it is the responsibility of all Coaches, Club Officials, Unions, Affiliates and Parents / Guardians to ensure that Rugby is as safe, fair and inclusive as possible. Primary consideration must always be given to the [Rugby Australia Safety Policy](#).



DETAILED STEP BY STEP PROCEDURES

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
1	<p>A Player is identified to undertake the Age Grade Dispensation Procedure</p> <p>A Player enters the Age Grade Dispensation Procedure via one of a number of ways, listed in the notes section, but in summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registering online and self-reporting height and weight, which is deemed to be above or below the 'Size for Age' Guidelines; • A player (or their Parent/Guardian) requests that they play in another age grade; or • A Club/School or an Independent Qualified Assessing Coach or the Competition Manager believes that a player may require assessment in order to determine the appropriate age grade for the child to play in. 	Accredited Coach / Club or School Official / Parent or Guardian / Competition Manager	<p>The starting point for activating the Age Dispensation Procedure will be the physical development of the player, relative to their eligible age grades.</p> <p>The process may be instigated via any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) A request for assessment from a player who is seeking dispensation (or their parent / guardian); OR b) A player falling outside the 'Size for Age' Guidelines for Australian Age Grade Rugby as measured at a Club / School or reported via the registration system (Rugby Link); OR c) Observations of an Independent Qualified Assessing Coach; OR d) A request made to the competition manager for an assessment of a player by a Club / School Official; OR e) At the discretion of the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative).
2	<p>Check 'Size for Age' Guidelines</p> <p>For each of these scenarios set out in Step 1 above, the Club / School initially, or competition manager subsequently will refer to the 'Size for Age' Guidelines.</p>	Club / School Competition Manager	<p>Please refer to the 'Size for Age' Guidelines to determine when an assessment is mandatory and when the decision to undertake an assessment is at the discretion of the Competition Manager. If the Competition Manager decides that it is not necessary to initiate the procedure, no further steps are required, and the Parent or Guardian is advised of this. If the Club / School or Competition Manager does not have height and weight for the player from the Competition Management System, he/she may ask for the completion of the Age Dispensation Consent Form and obtain height and weight data from this form or record data at Club / School.</p>
3	<p>Parent / Guardian asked to provide Age Grade Dispensation Consent Form</p>	Club / School OR Competition Manager	<p>Where the player is requesting dispensation, the Club and School can provide the form, otherwise the Competition Manager can do so.</p>

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
3	Qualified Independent Assessing Coach Assigned	Competition Manager	The Competition Manager will then give the Club / School a relevant list of Independent Qualified Assessing Coaches for the competition for the assessment process to be undertaken. The list of Qualified Assessing Coaches is maintained by the relevant Union Coach Development Manager. The Consent Form must be completed before undertaking the assessment.
4	An Independent Qualified Assessing Coach is contacted	Club / School	A date/time for the assessment is arranged for the Club/School to determine the physical development, ability and/or experience of the player relative to the proposed playing age group.
6	Assessment is undertaken The assessment process ideally occurs at training and during a match in the player's actual age grade.	Independent Qualified Assessing Coach	At the assessment the player's height and weight is accurately recorded. Prescribed field-based tests are undertaken (if required), skills tests, match/training assessment and the Assessing Coach's report is completed.
7	The Assessing Coach's Report is submitted 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 Rugby AU prior to participate in rugby, as outlined in <i>Schedule B* - Exception for Front Row</i> . <i>*Please note: Not required for Sevens Rugby.</i>	Independent Qualified Assessing Coach	The Assessing Coach's Report can be submitted using the online form, OR a copy of the Assessing Coach's Report can be returned to the Club / School and the Competition Manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) with a recommendation of the appropriate age grade for the player.
8	Competition Manager reviews the Assessing Coach's recommendation If the outcome is that the Competition Manager requests a further Independent Assessment, then please return to Step 3 .	Competition Manager	The Competition Manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) will review the assessment and either: a) Accept or decline the Age Dispensation application; OR b) Request a further independent assessment in line with the Rugby Australia Safety Policy and the Rugby Australia Participation Policy before making any decision; OR c) Make a recommendation to the player (or their parent/guardian) as to their appropriate age grade based on the initial assessment or any subsequent assessment; OR

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
			d) 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 required to participate in a specific age group (either within or outside the player's eligible age grades) based on the original assessment or any subsequent assessment where it is believed that their participation presents/may present a safety risk to themselves or other participants.
9	Parent / Guardian consulted	Club / School via Competition Manager	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 required to move age grade, the player and their parent/guardian must be consulted and provided with the reasons for the recommendation.
10	Player's Age Grade Confirmed	Competition Manager/State Union Head of Game Development	The Head of Game Development (or another person nominated by the CEO of the State or Territory Union) may, in exceptional circumstances, require that a player participates 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 safety risk to themselves or other participants.
11	Changes made to the Competition Management System	Competition Manager	Appropriate changes are then made in the Competition Management System to enable participation in the determined age grade. This may include the remittance / refund of any necessary conversion fees.
12	Club / School and Parent / Guardian informed	Competition Manager	The Club / School and the Parent / Guardian is informed of the above.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- All coaches, Club/School officials and Unions have a duty of care and are required to follow this procedure and the Rugby Australia Safety Policy to ensure that players are, at all times, playing in the appropriate age grade competition based on their physical development, ability and experience.
- **Please note that intentional or reckless disregard for the policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action pursuant to the Rugby Australia Code of Conduct or the Rugby Australia Member Protection Policy.**
- Any complaints made by players (or their parents/guardians) regarding any decision made under these procedures must be dealt with pursuant to the grievance procedures of the relevant Union with jurisdiction over the competition.
- Rugby AU has the discretion to review any decision made in accordance with this Age Dispensation Procedure and/or conduct any necessary investigation as appropriate.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Rugby Australia [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Age Grade Dispensation Consent Form](#)
- Assessing Coach's Report
- [Dispensation Schedule B - Exception for Front Row](#)
- Rugby Australia [Safety Policy](#)
- Rugby Australia [Participation Policy](#)
- Rugby Australia [Member Protection Policy](#)
- [Junior Age Grade/Senior Rugby Guidelines Table](#)
- 'Size for Age' Guidelines
- Physical Development Guidelines for Australian Age Grade Rugby