

Wakehurst FC Grading Policy

Purpose

To place players in teams that align with their skill levels, supporting individual and team development while fostering a lifelong love for the game. This approach reflects Wakehurst FC's commitment to inclusivity, excellence, and community engagement.

Why Graded Teams?

Graded teams are established to:

- **Enhance Player Development:** Grouping players with similar abilities allows tailored coaching and strategies, optimising growth.
- **Promote Competitive Balance:** Facing opponents of similar skill ensures more engaging and rewarding matches.
- **Encourage Progression:** Players in graded teams are better positioned to advance to higher divisions or representative pathways.
- **Foster Long-Term Enjoyment:** Balanced competition keeps players motivated and engaged.
- **Align with Club Values:** Graded teams help us balance inclusivity and excellence, providing pathways for all players.

1. Applicability

- **U6–U8:** Teams are formed based on school and friendship groups. **No grading is conducted for these age groups.**
- **U9–U10:** Grading is optional. Players who wish to be considered for ability-graded teams are encouraged to attend grading sessions.
- **U11–U18:** Grading is compulsory for all players.
- **Senior Teams (All Age and Over 35/45):** Generally not subject to a formal grading process, though competitive divisions may be assessed separately if needed.
- **Age Eligibility:** To qualify for an "under" age group, players must be under the specified age at the start of the current year. For example, U10 players must be under 10 years old on January 1.

2. Grading Process

2.1 Grading Sessions

- Grading sessions are held annually before the season; dates are announced well in advance.
- Sessions are organised by age group.
- Attendance at all sessions is strongly encouraged for accurate assessment.
- Players unable to attend are encouraged to notify the club as early as possible. Placement will rely on coach reports and prior assessments.
- Players with illness or injury during grading should notify the club promptly. Placement may be based on past performance.

Goalkeepers:

- Players wishing to be full-time goalkeepers will be graded as such.
- Part-time goalkeepers will be graded as outfield players.
- Players selected as full-time goalkeepers are committed to that position for the duration of the season.
- Full-time goalkeepers are given priority for goalkeeper training provided by the club.
- Players interested in goalkeeping are encouraged to notify the relevant Vice President before grading begins.

Format:

- Small-sided games are used for grading as they encourage frequent ball touches and active participation, providing the best opportunity for assessment.
- Players must wear appropriate football attire, including boots and shin guards.

2.2 Assessment Criteria

Players are evaluated on:

- **Technical Skills:** Ball control, passing, shooting, and defending.
- **Game Awareness:** Positional play, decision-making, and teamwork.
- **Physical Attributes:** Speed, agility, and endurance.
- **Attitude:** Effort, commitment, and respect for teammates, opponents, and officials.

All criteria are assessed during dynamic gameplay rather than static drills for a comprehensive evaluation.

3. Team Formation

- For the U9–U16 age groups, players are selected into teams based on their overall footballing ability rather than specific positional preferences, with the exception of goalkeepers. This approach ensures a fair and equitable grading process while prioritising player development and fostering adaptability.
- Teams are ideally formed with 3–4 reserves to ensure balanced game time and accommodate player availability. This structure promotes fairness and development for all players.

3.1 Assessment Sources

Team placements are based on:

- **Grading Sessions:** Provide a snapshot of skills and game awareness relative to other grading players.
- **Coach Reports:** Offer detailed evaluations of players' previous season performances, including:
 - Skills and competitiveness in full-size games.
 - Attitude, effort, and commitment at training.
 - Contribution to team culture and teamwork.

This combined approach ensures fair and comprehensive team placement across all age groups.

4. Playing Up

- Players may request to play in an older age group if deemed capable. However, if this creates a shortfall in their true age group, they may be required to return to their true age group.
- Unless an exemption is granted by the Manly Warringah Football Association, players cannot play in a younger age group.

5. Dual-Registered Girls

- Dual-registered players (playing in both mixed and girls-only competitions) will be graded separately for each competition.
- Priority for team placement in the mixed competition is given to male players, as it is their only competition.
- Female players registered only in the mixed competition are graded using the same criteria as male players.

6. Grading Committee

- The Grading Committee includes Age Group Vice Presidents, experienced football personnel, and independent assessors to ensure fairness.
- The committee's decisions are final, though an appeals process is available for exceptional cases.

7. Appeals Process

- Appeals must be submitted in writing within seven days of team announcements.
- Valid grounds for an appeal include:
 - New information unavailable during grading.
 - Medical conditions or circumstances impacting performance.
- Supporting documentation is encouraged where relevant.
- The Grading Committee will review appeals and respond within seven days.

8. Special Considerations

- Late registrations will be placed in teams subject to availability.

9. Communication

- Team selections will be posted on the club's website as soon as practical after the final grading session. Queries must include the player's full name and age group to assist with efficient handling.
- Grading-related queries should be directed to the Grading Committee at grading@wakehurstfc.com.au.

10. Fairness and Transparency

Wakehurst FC is committed to providing a fair and positive experience for all players. While every effort is made to consider individual preferences, team balance and competitiveness remain the primary focus. The grading process is reviewed annually to ensure ongoing improvement and alignment with Wakehurst FC's values. Feedback from players, parents, and coaches is considered during the review process.