



PLAYER REGISTRATION REGULATIONS 2023/24

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1. Restrictions on all except bona-fide Players

A bona-fide player (amateur or professional) of a club is one who has registered via the IFA Comet Football Management System (FMS). No player may play in any competition under the auspices of the NIFL unless and until he/she has been so registered, and it shall be the responsibility of all clubs playing in any match organised by the NIFL to ensure that its players are eligible to play in any such match.

Failure to do so constitutes misconduct and the defaulting club(s) shall be liable to such penalties as indicated in the respective league rules.

2. Registration of Players

(a) Female Registrations

The registration period from;

6 February 2023 until 5pm on 30 April 2023 and;
1 July 2023 until 5pm on 31 July 2023.

Registration periods apply to the;

- i. NIFL Women's Premiership
- ii. NIFL Women's Academy League (U19)

All players, both professional and amateur must be registered during one of the official registration periods.

(b) Male Registrations

The registration period from;

14 June 2023 until 1 September 2023 and;
1 January 2024 until 1 February 2024

Registration periods apply to the;

- i. NIFL Premiership
- ii. Championship
- iii. Premier Intermediate League
- iv. Premiership Development League (U20)
- v. Championship Development League (U21)

All players, both professional and amateur must be registered during one of the official registration periods.

Amateur (only) players may register to participate in the NIFL Academy League at any time between;

14 June and 31 October 2023 and;
1 January until 31 January 2024

For the avoidance of any doubt a professional player is not eligible to participate in the NIFL Academy League Under 18 and Under 16 sections.

- (c) Professional players who were not bound by an employment contract before expiry of the registration period may be registered outside the aforementioned registration period provided that such player has not made more than the permitted number of moves as per (d) below and their registration has been input and confirmed on the IFA CRS prior to;

- 12 noon on 31st March of the current season (Men)
- 12 noon on 31st August of the current season (Women)

An exception to the above applies to a female player that has taken maternity leave. For more information please refer to the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations.

- (d) Players may be registered for a maximum of three clubs during the season.

During this period, the player is eligible to play in official matches for two clubs only. Players returning to their former clubs after a loan period must leave and return in the registration periods in order to be eligible to play in the NIFL.

- (e) No player under 16 years of age may be registered as a professional player.

- (f) Players wishing to be transferred to another country may do so at any time provided that the registration period is open in that Country.

Similarly, players cannot be registered for senior clubs in Northern Ireland unless the registration period is open.

The IFA is not permitted to request an International Transfer Certificate outside a registration period and clubs must submit properly completed registration forms in order to affect a request for an International Transfer Certificate.

International transfers of players are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18. The following five exceptions to this rule apply:

- I. The player's parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football.
- II. The player is aged between 16 and 18 and:
 - a. the transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA); or
 - b. the transfer takes place between two associations within the same country.

The new club must fulfil the following minimum obligations:
 - c. It shall provide the player with an adequate football education and/or training in line with the highest national standards (cf. Annexe 4, article 4).
 - d. It shall guarantee the player an academic and/or school and/or vocational education and/or training, in addition to his football education and/ or training, which will allow the player to pursue a career other than football should he cease to play professional football.

- e. It shall make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the player is looked after in the best possible way (optimum living standards with a host family or in club accommodation, appointment of a mentor at the club, etc.).
 - f. It shall, on registration of such a player, provide the relevant association with proof that it is complying with the aforementioned obligations.
- III. The player lives no further than 50km from a national border and the club with which the player wishes to be registered in the neighbouring association is also within 50km of that border. The maximum distance between the player's domicile and the club's headquarters shall be 100km. In such cases, the player must continue to live at home and the two associations concerned must give their explicit consent.
 - IV. The player flees his country of origin for humanitarian reasons, specifically related to his life or freedom being threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group, or political opinion, without his parents and is therefore at least temporarily permitted to reside in the country of arrival.
 - V. The player is a student and moves without his parents to another country temporarily for academic reasons in order to undertake an exchange programme. The duration of the player's registration for the new club until he turns 18 or until the end of the academic or school programme cannot exceed one year. The player's new club may only be a purely amateur club without a professional team or without a legal, financial or de facto link to a professional club.

3. Licence for Migrant Workers

For any player who is a national of a country outside of the United Kingdom or Ireland (migrant), a club require a Governing Body Endorsement (GBE) in order to play/manage in professional or semi-professional clubs within the United Kingdom.

Clubs in the NI Football League are bound by the professional registration windows and the Irish FA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations therefore they are considered by the Home Office as semi-professional or professional clubs.

A migrant can register for a club without a GBE but, in order to play/ manage any football, he must have obtained a GBE, been assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship by that club and secured permission to stay under the International Sportsperson route (ISP) of the PBS (subject to satisfying any other eligibility requirements of the IFA and any competitions the club participates in).

Details of the criteria and application procedures for migrant workers are available upon request from the IFA.

It is the responsibility of each club to determine the nationality of each player in relation to this rule.

4. Registration Procedure

Professional Players

- i. All Standard Professional Contracts must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS by Club Registrars.
- ii. Such Standard Professional Contract's must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- iii. Clubs must simultaneously upload a copy of the Standard Professional Contract to the IFA Comet FMS.
- iv. Any player who is under the age of 18 on the date of registration must have written consent from a parent or guardian agreeing to the registration.
- v. The minimum basic rates of remuneration shall apply to all professional registrations as follows:

23 year old and over	£72.94
21 year old and over	£71.26
18-20 year olds	£52.43
16-17 year olds	£36.96
- vi. In the event of these minimum thresholds not being observed the relevant registration documents shall be considered null and void.
- vii. If an intermediary is involved in the negotiation of a contract, he/she shall be named in that contract.
- viii. The minimum length of a Standard Professional Contract shall be from its effective date until the end of the season, while the maximum length shall be five years. Contracts of any other length shall only be permitted if consistent with national laws. Players under the age of 18 may not sign a professional contract for a term longer than three years. Any clause referring to a longer period shall not be recognised.
- ix. Professionals who end their careers upon expiry of their contracts and amateurs who terminate their activity shall remain registered at the association of their last club for a period of 30 months.

This period begins on the day the player made his last appearance for the club in an official match.

- x. Priority of registration shall determine the eligibility of a player to play for the club with which he was first registered.

Amateur Players

- xi. All amateur registrations must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS by Club Registrars.
- xii. Such registrations must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- xiii. It is recommended that clubs upload a signed copy of the players registration form, in the event of a dispute between the club and the player, as conclusive proof of the registration.
- xiv. Any player who is under the age of 18 on the date of registration must have written consent from a parent or guardian agreeing to the registration.
- xv. The length of an amateur registration shall be from its effective date until the end of June 2024. Re-registration of players in a professional league is available via Comet FMS from 14 – 30 June (Men) & 6-28 February (Women).
- xvi. Priority of registration shall determine the eligibility of a player to play for the club with which he was first registered.
- xvii. In the event of a team whose club participate in both professional and purely amateur competitions such clubs shall be permitted to register players outside the fixed registration periods (but within the amateur game registration period of 1st June – 31st March) but such players so registered shall be restricted to playing for the team who participates in purely amateur competitions. Such player will only become eligible to participate in a professional game competition at the commencement of the subsequent registration period.

5. Reacquisition of Amateur Status

- a. A player registered as a professional may not re-register as an amateur until at least 30 days after his last match as a professional (and provided the previous registration has either expired or been cancelled).
- b. No compensation is payable upon reacquisition of amateur status. If a player re-registers as a professional within 30 months of being reinstated as an amateur, his new club shall pay training compensation in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players.

6. Transfers

- a. Both Professional and Amateur players moving clubs will be required to complete a transfer. The transfer instruction must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS in accordance with the Comet User Guide and approved by both clubs involved in the transfer

- b. Such transfers must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- c. Approval will not be given to any transfer which stipulates when or against whom the player may or may not play.

7. Transfer Fees

Unless otherwise mutually agreed and committed to writing at the time of such transfer of registration at least 50% of the transfer fee plus VAT at the standard rate must be paid on the date of signing, and any balance outstanding must be paid in full within six months of the registration of the transfer, and at the end of the six month period should any balance remain outstanding then the defaulting club shall no longer be permitted to use the services of such player until the full amount outstanding has been paid.

Similarly, the same restriction shall apply where a club has mutually agreed in writing to pay a transfer fee by instalments and subsequently defaults with such payments. The offended club shall inform the NIFL in writing of the circumstances and the Secretary shall notify the offending club accordingly.

8. Loan of Professional Players

- a. A professional player may be loaned to another club on the basis of a written agreement between him and the clubs concerned (temporary transfer (loan) of Standard Professional Contract) and submitted by the Club Registrar via the IFA CRS. Any such loan is subject to the same rules as apply to the transfer of players, including the provisions on training compensation and the solidarity mechanism.
- b. The loan of amateur players is not permitted.
- c. All loans shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:
 - i. The minimum loan period shall be the time between two registration periods (subject to Article 5.3 of the FIFA Regulations).
 - ii. A player's loan period must not exceed the period of the player's registration with his parent club.
 - iii. Upon the expiry of the loan period the player shall automatically return to his parent club
 - iv. A player whose registration is temporarily transferred shall be permitted to play only for the borrowing club during the period of such transfer and shall not be permitted to play in matches against the parent club. It shall be the responsibility of the club registering the player on loan (borrowing club) to ensure that the necessary insurance cover is provided should the player become injured during his/her period of loan. In the event that no such insurance is procured the club may be liable for all costs associated with such injury, which shall be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee
 - v. The loaning club shall be permitted to recall a player temporarily transferred to another club at any time during an official registration period. The club that has accepted a player on a loan basis is not entitled to transfer him to a third club without the written authorisation of the club that released the player on loan and the player concerned.

9. Cancellation of a Registration

Professional

a. A professional registration may be cancelled at any time by mutual consent on the submission of the official cancellation form via the IFA CRS.

Amateur

b. Cancellation of an amateur player shall only be administered by the Irish Football Association to cancel an amateur player's registration where he/she is moving to another national association.

10. Right of Approach

A Club intending to conclude a contract with a player who is at present under written contract with another club is obliged to inform the club and the player in writing before commencing negotiations with either of them.

The player shall only be free to conclude a contract with another club if his contract with his present club has expired or will expire within six months.

All correspondence in this regard must be sent by special delivery post to the player, the club and to the Irish Football Association.

Any club wishing to register a player whose contract with his current club will expire within six months shall be permitted to register such player under a pre contract agreement to commence on the day following the expiry of his current contract, in accordance with the procedures detailed in Rule 4. Club secretaries shall be permitted to request details of the expiry dates of any player's registration.

Any club wishing to lodge a complaint with the League regarding an alleged illegal approach shall submit such complaint in writing by special delivery post to the League Chief Executive accompanied by a fee of £250. At the same time, a copy of the complaint must be forwarded by special delivery post to the club complained against.

The NIFL Board will deal with such complaints and any club found guilty of making an illegal approach to a player of another club, will face a sanction from the NIFL board.

The NIFL Board will have such powers to impose either a mandatory or points deduction sanction to the guilty club.

11. Registration Disputes

- a. In the event of a dispute between a player (professional or amateur) and a club, details should be submitted, by the aggrieved party, to the IFA Player Registration Sub Committee, who shall act as the Dispute Resolution Body.

- b. In any dispute between the player and the club the remuneration and any other benefits contained in the Agreement shall be deemed to be the player's complete entitlement.