

Northern Ireland Football League
Player Registration Regulations
2021/22

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 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) The registration period (from 9 June until midnight on 31 August 2021 and from 1st January until midnight on 31 January 2022) will apply to the NIFL Premiership, Championship, Premier Intermediate League and Premiership Development (U20) League clubs.

All players, both professional and amateur must be registered during one of the official registration periods. Youth team players are unaffected by the registration periods and amateur players may register to participate in the NIFL Academy League at any time between 9 June and midnight 31 October 2021 and from 1 January until midnight on 31 January 2022. 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.

- (b) Amateur players may register to participate in the NIFL Women's Premiership at any time between 1 March until midnight on 9 May 2021 and 12 July until midnight on 31 July 2021
- (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 (c) below and their registration has been input and confirmed on the IFA CRS prior to 12 noon on 31st March of the current season.
- (d) Players may be registered for a maximum of three clubs during the period from 1st July until 30th June of the following year. 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 Premiership, Championship or Under 20 Development League.
- (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 (Except as provided for in Rule 2 (b) and clubs must submit properly completed registration forms in order to affect a request for an International Transfer Certificate.

No International Transfer Certificate can be sought or granted for a player under 18 years of age. The following three exceptions to this rule apply:

- (1) The player's parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football; or
- (2) The transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union (EU) and the player is aged between 16 and 18. In this case, the new club must fulfil the following minimum obligations:
 - (i) It shall provide the player with an adequate football education and/or training in line with the highest national standards.
 - (ii) 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 playing professional football.
 - (iii) It shall make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the player is looked after in the best possible way (optimum living standards with a guest family or in club accommodation, appointment of a mentor at the club etc.).
 - (iv) It shall, on registration of such a player, provide the relevant Association with proof that it is complying with the aforementioned obligations; or
- (3) The player lives no further than 50km of that border. The maximum distance between the player's domicile and the club's quarters shall be 100km. In such cases, the player must continue to live at home and the two Associations concerned must give their explicit consent.
- (4) Every international transfer according to Rule 2 (e) (2) and every first registration according to Rule 2 (e) (3) is subject to the approval of the sub-committee appointed by the FIFA Players' Status Committee for that purpose. The application for approval shall be submitted by the association that wishes to register the player. The former association shall be given the opportunity to submit its position. The sub-committee's approval shall be obtained prior to any request from an association for an International Transfer Certificate and/or a first registration. Any violations of this provision will be sanctioned by the Disciplinary Committee in accordance with the FIFA Disciplinary Code. In addition to the association that failed to apply to the sub-committee, as well as on the clubs that reached an agreement for the transfer of a minor.

3. Licence for Migrant Workers

Players who are nationals of a country not in membership of the European Union require a licence (which shall be issued by the UK Border Agency) in order to obtain employment as a Professional player within the United Kingdom.

A copy of the licence must be forwarded to the IFA and the player shall not become eligible to play until such licence has been received by the IFA.

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

a. 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 £62.37 per week
 - 21 year old and over £58.52
 - 18-20 year olds £45.92 per week
 - 16-17 year olds £32.34 per week
- 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.

b. Amateur Players

- i. All amateur registrations must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS by Club Registrars.

- ii. Such registrations must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- iii. 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.
- 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 length of an amateur registration shall be from its effective date until the end of June 2022. Re-registration of players in a professional league is available via Comet FMS from 9 – 30 June.
- vi. Priority of registration shall determine the eligibility of a player to play for the club with which he was first registered.
- vii. 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 Article 20 of 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 Premiership
 - 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 found making an illegal approach to a player of another club will be fined in the sum of £5000 with £4000 going to the club that has lost the player, and £1000 going to the NIFL.

Any club wishing to lodge a complaint with the League with regard to an alleged illegal approach shall submit such complaint in writing by special delivery post accompanied by a fee of £100. At the same time a copy of the complaint must be forwarded by special delivery post to the club complained against.

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.