

**REGULATIONS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE  
NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM 2017/18**

**1. Definitions**

In the interpretation of these Regulations: any words and expressions, unless otherwise defined herein, shall be words and expressions as defined as follows:-

“AC” means the Alliance Committee appointed by FA Council.

“Association” means The Football Association Limited.

“Club” means a football club for the time being in a League in membership of the NLS.

“Competition” means a League in the National League System.

“Conditional Licence” means a Licence with conditions attached to be met by a Club within a period determined by the Competition in which the Club holding the Licence is allocated by the Leagues Committee. ~~Such period is not to exceed 1 March in the Membership Year to which the Licence relates. Save in exceptional circumstances a Conditional Licence cannot be granted to a Club for successive Membership Years in respect of the same Criterion.~~

“League” means any competition sanctioned by the Association and/or an Affiliated Association in membership of the NLS.

“LC” means the Leagues Committee appointed by FA Council.

“Licence” means an annual licence required to be held by a Club to be a member of a Competition that may be either an Unconditional Licence or Conditional Licence.

“NLS” means the National League System of competitions controlled by the Association where promotion and relegation links exist between participating Leagues.

“Playing Season” means the period between the date on which the first competitive fixture in the League is played each year until the date on which the last competitive fixture in the League is played. For Clubs participating in Play Off Matches this does include the period when Play Off Matches are played.

“Play Off Matches” means matches played between Clubs in a Play Off Position on a format to be determined by each League provided that the format is the same across each Step.

“Play Off Position” means the position of a Club at the end of each Playing Season which ~~is provided for in Standardised Rule 13 as qualifying the~~ ~~qualifies that~~ Club to take part in a Play Off Match to qualify for promotion to the next Step for the next Playing Season.

“Regulations” means these regulations.

“Rules” means the FA Standardised Rules or FA Standard Code of Rules under which a League is administered.

“Step” means the level at which a Club participates in the National League System.

“Unconditional Licence” means a Licence without any conditions attached.

**2. The ~~National League System~~ (“NLS”) shall be operated in accordance with the Regulations.**

~~A Club shall be required to hold a Licence to be a member of a Competition at Steps 1 to 4 of the NLS.~~

The aims and objectives of the NLS are to provide:

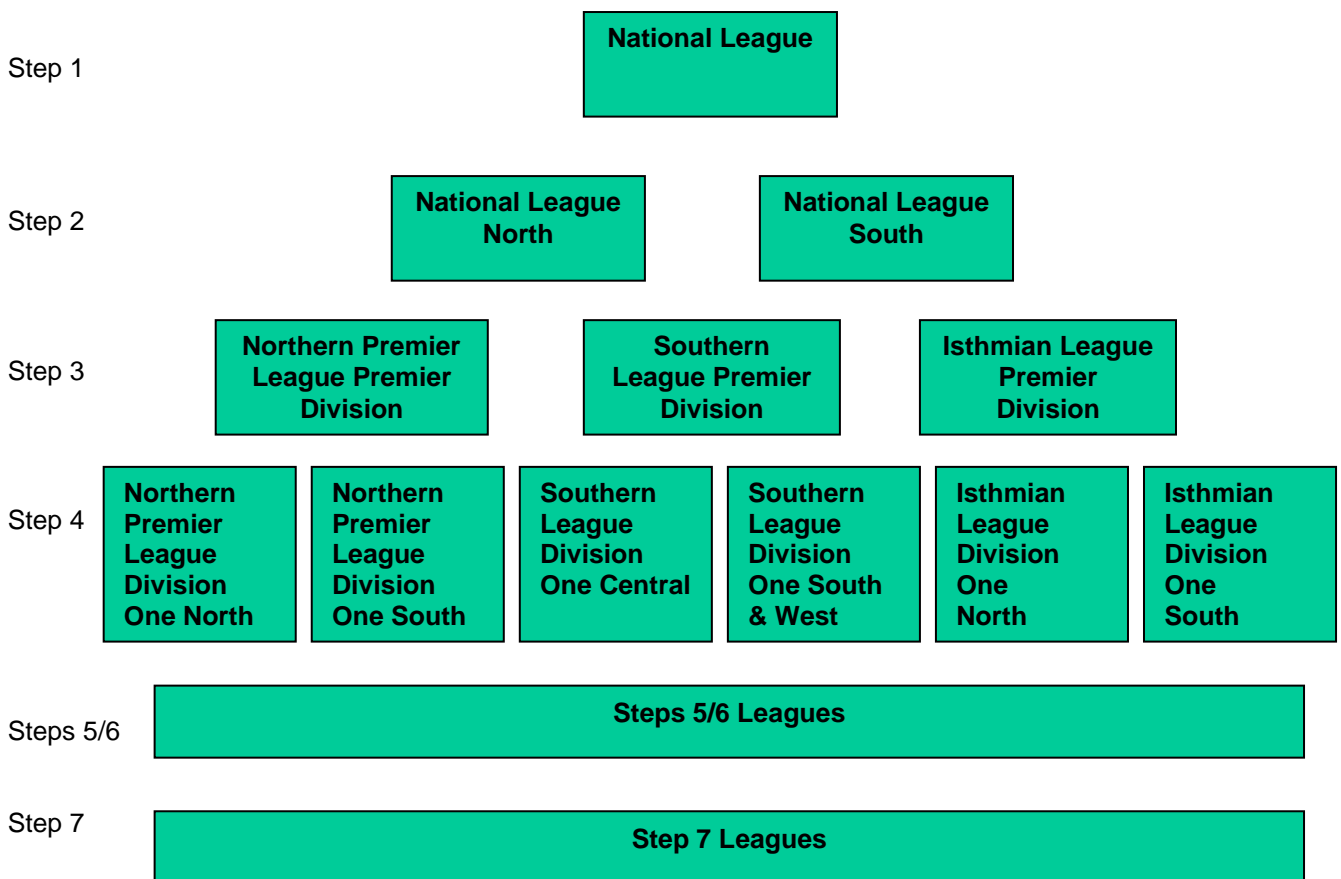
- 2.1 Clubs with a level of competitive football appropriate to their playing ability, stadium/ground facilities and geographical location.
- 2.2 A framework for discussion on matters of policy and common interest to Leagues and Clubs.
- 2.3 The seasonal movement of Clubs.
- 2.4 **The start and the end date of the Playing Season**

All Leagues are bound by the Regulations. A Club is bound by the Regulations from the date it has qualified for placement into the NLS until such time as it leaves the NLS for whatever reason.

- 3. **A Club shall be required to hold a Licence to be a member of a Competition at Steps 1 to 4 to be eligible for promotion from Step 5.**

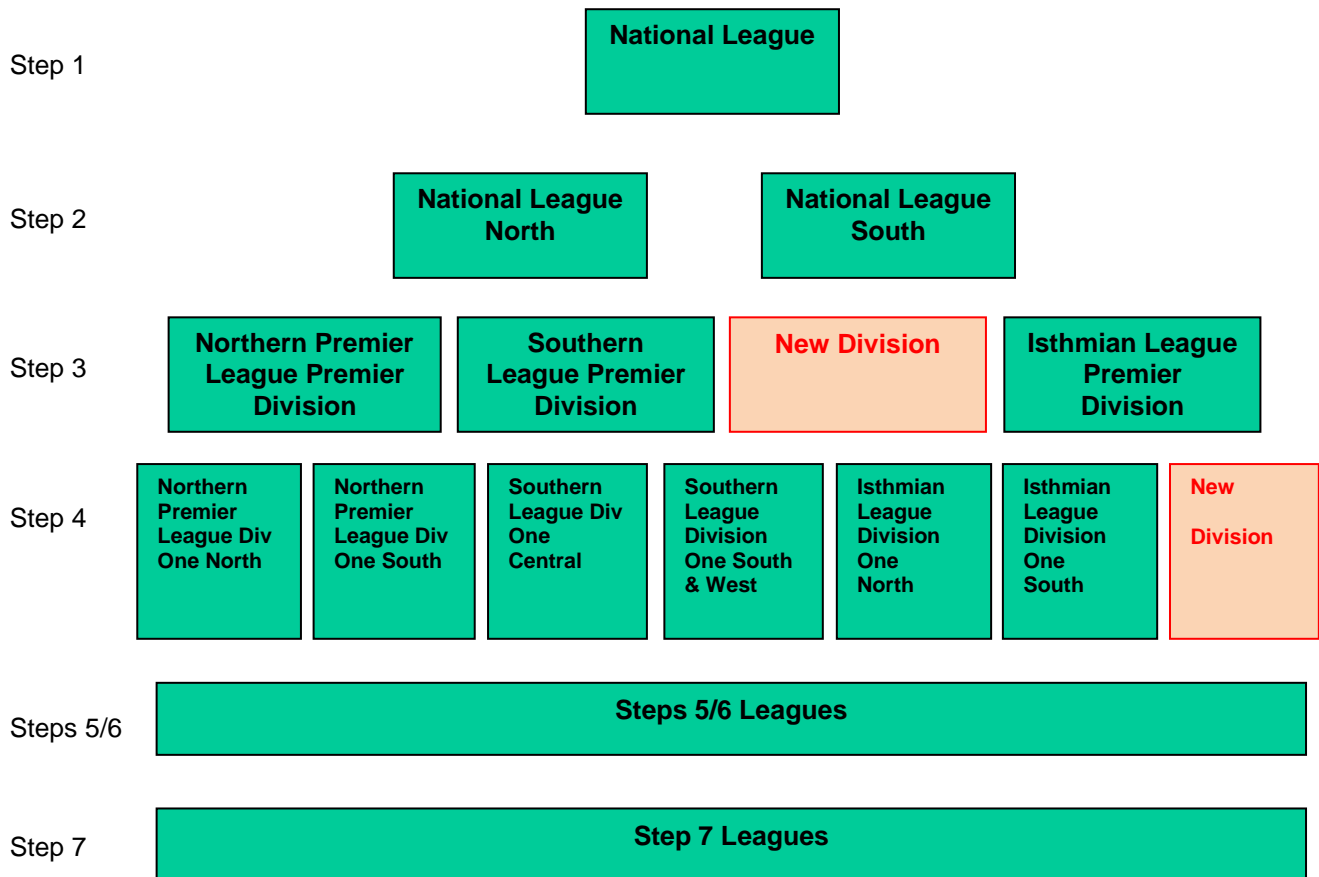
**3.4. Position of a League in the National League System**

**3.4.1** The current structure of the NLS is set out below:



The Leagues currently at Steps 5, 6 and 7 are set out at the end of the Regulations.

**With effect from the commencement of the 2018/19 season the structure of the NLS will be as set out below:**



**4.2** Each division at every Step shall have a the following number of Clubs as follows; Step 1 – 24, Step 2 – 22, Step 3 – 22, Step 4 – 20, Step 5 – 20. At Steps 6 and 7 the number of Clubs in each division will be decided by the LC taking into account all relevant factors. Notwithstanding this, at Step 6 each division shall have no more than 20 Clubs, at Step 7 each division shall have no more than 16 Clubs.

**3.2 4.3** Any league wishing to become part of the NLS must apply to The Association by 31st December in the relevant year in such form and/or providing such information as shall be required by the LC from time to time. The decision as to whether or not a league should be admitted to the NLS shall be made by the LC which will then decide on the Step at which the League will **play compete**.

**3.3 4.4** Any League wishing to propose an adjustment to its position within the NLS must apply in writing to the LC by 31<sup>st</sup> December in any year for such proposal to be determined by the LC in order, if approved, to have effect in the following Playing Season.

#### **4.5. Rules and Regulations for Promotion and Relegation**

The LC shall provide for the seasonal promotion, relegation or lateral movement of Clubs. A League must be committed to promoting and relegating Clubs at the conclusion of each Playing Season.

#### **5.6. Detailed Promotion and Relegation Issues**

**5.4 6.1** The criteria for entry to the NLS and the criteria for ground/stadium facilities and the criteria for participation in Play Off Matches shall be determined by the LC. All criteria so determined shall be published by The Association from time to time.

~~5.2~~ 6.2 At the conclusion of each Playing Season, the following procedures will apply to promotion/relegation subject to the application of the Rules:

#### Step 1 and Step 2

~~The following does not apply to promotion from Step 1~~ These regulations do not deal with promotion from Step 1.

The Clubs finishing in the bottom four places at Step 1 at the end of the Playing Season will be relegated to a feeder pool and placed in the most geographically appropriate division at Step 2 for the following Playing Season. They will be replaced by the Clubs finishing in 1<sup>st</sup> position in each of the divisions at Step 2 together with a further two Clubs determined by a series of Play Off Matches. Where a Club finishes in 1<sup>st</sup> position but does not meet the criteria for participation at the next Step, the Club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position shall be promoted. ~~and the Club finishing in the next eligible position shall take part in the Play Off Matches. Where a Club finishes in a Play Off Position but does not meet the criteria for participation in Play Off Matches the Club finishing in the next eligible position shall take part in the Play Off Matches. The Play Off Matches shall be played home and away so that in each Step 2 division the highest placed of the eligible Clubs plays against the lowest placed and the other two Clubs play each other. The aggregate winners will play each other in a one-off match and the winner of that match will be promoted. If there are only three eligible Clubs then the highest placed shall receive a bye to a second match where it will play the winner of the other Play Off Match and the winner of that match will be promoted. Clubs finishing below position 7 will not be considered for Play Off Matches~~ The clubs finishing in 2nd, 3rd, 4th, & 5th, 6th & 7th positions shall take part in the Play-Off Matches. The Play-Off Matches shall be played so that in each Step 2 division there is a qualifying round, semi-finals and a promotion final with all ties being played over a single leg. The winner of the promotional final will be promoted. If a Club is not eligible to enter the Competition then it shall not take part in any Competition matches. In that event such Club shall not be replaced and the Competition structure and draw shall be adjusted as necessary by the Competition on the basis of the remaining Clubs' final league positions.

#### Step 2 and Step 3

The Clubs in the bottom three places in each of the two divisions at Step 2 at the end of the Playing Season will be relegated to a feeder pool and placed in the most geographically appropriate division at Step 3 for the following Playing Season. They will be replaced by the Clubs finishing in 1<sup>st</sup> position in each of the divisions at Step 3 together with a further three Clubs determined by a series of Play Off Matches. Where a Club finishes in 1<sup>st</sup> position but does not meet the criteria for participation at the next Step, the Club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position shall be promoted and the Club finishing in the next eligible position shall take part in the Play Off Matches. Where a Club finishes in a Play Off Position but does not meet the criteria for participation in Play Off Matches the Club finishing in the next eligible position shall take part in the Play Off Matches. The Play Off Matches shall be played so that the highest placed of the eligible Clubs plays against the lowest placed and the other two Clubs play each other. ~~At Step 2 the aggregate winners will play each other and the winner of that match will be promoted and~~ At Step 3 the winners of each first match will play each other in a one-off match at the ground of the higher placed Club and the winner of that match will be promoted. If there are only three eligible Clubs then the highest placed shall receive a bye to a second match where it will play the winner of the other Play Off Match and the winner of that match will be promoted. Clubs finishing below position 7 will not be considered for Play Off Matches.

The promoted Clubs will be placed in a feeder pool and placed in the most geographically appropriate division at Step 2.

#### Step 3 and Step 4

The Clubs ~~in the bottom four places finishing in last place~~ finishing in last place in each of the three divisions at Step 3 at the end of the Playing Season will be relegated to a feeder pool and placed in the most geographically appropriate division at Step 4 for the following Playing Season. ~~They will be replaced by the Club finishing in 1st position in each of the divisions at Step 4 together with a further six Clubs to be determined by a series of Play Off Matches~~ Nineteen Clubs will be

promoted from Step 4. These Clubs will be the twelve Clubs finishing in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> position in each division, together with six Clubs determined by a series of Play-Off Matches together with the highest-ranked Club losing its division's Play-Off final on a points per game basis during the regular Playing Season. Where a Club finishes in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> position but does not meet the criteria for participation at the next Step, the Club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position shall be promoted and the Club finishing in ~~the next eligible 3<sup>rd</sup>~~ (and 4<sup>th</sup> if both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> do not qualify) position shall take part in the Play Off Matches. Where a Club finishes in a Play Off Position but does not meet the criteria for participation in Play Off Matches the Club finishing in the next eligible position shall take part in the Play Off Matches. The Play Off Matches shall be played **on a single match basis** so that the highest placed of the eligible Clubs plays against the lowest placed and the other two Clubs play each other. The winners of each match will play each other and the winner of that match will be **promoted**. If there are only three eligible Clubs then the highest placed shall receive a bye to a second match where it will play the winner of the other Play Off Match and the winner of that match will be promoted. Clubs finishing below position ~~7~~ **8** will not be considered for Play Off Matches.

The promoted Clubs will be placed in a feeder pool and placed in the most geographically appropriate division at Step 3.

In the event of vacancies arising at Step 3, the other losing play-off finalists shall be ranked on a points by game basis during the regular playing season, with vacancies being filled by the highest ranked Club(s).

#### Step 4 and Step 5

At the end of the Playing Season the Clubs in ~~the bottom two last place~~ places in each of the four divisions at Step 4 administered by the Northern Premier and Southern Leagues, together with the Clubs in ~~the bottom three last places~~ in each of the two divisions administered by the Isthmian League will be relegated and placed in the most geographically appropriate League at Step 5. ~~Irrespective of any provision contained within the Rules the Clubs finishing in bottom position in each of the six Step 4 divisions will be relegated and will not be reprieved.~~ These Clubs will be replaced by the ~~fourteen~~ **twenty six** most suitable Clubs from the Leagues at Step 5, as determined by the LC. The suitability shall be determined as the **highest placed Club finishing in 4<sup>th</sup> position** in each Step 5 League which meets the entry criteria, ~~with the remaining twelve promoted Clubs being determined by a selection process to be determined by the LC at its discretion. No appeal shall lie in respect of the selection process except on the grounds that the LC has failed to follow its own criteria, and wishes to be considered for promotion.~~ In the event of the 1<sup>st</sup> placed Club not being eligible, the Clubs finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> position shall be subject to the same criteria. ~~In usual circumstances, no more than one Club will be promoted from any one League~~ The LC will determine additional criteria to fill any vacancies that occur. The Clubs to be promoted from Step 5 will be allocated to the most geographically appropriate division at Step 4.

~~If vacancies remain, consideration will be given to reprieving those Clubs other than bottom placed clubs relegated from Step 4 who will be ranked according to the average number of points gained per games played and the Club with the highest average shall be reprieved first. In the event of Clubs having an identical record the Club to be reprieved shall be determined by the LC.~~

~~Any Club seeking promotion from Step 5 to Step 4 must make application to the Association on the prescribed form, copied to their existing League, by 30<sup>th</sup> November in the relevant year. The application must be accompanied by the appropriate application fee, as determined by the LC, which is non refundable. Applicant Clubs must achieve a minimum E Grade by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the Playing Season when promotion is sought.~~

~~A Club seeking to be promoted to Step 4 shall also be required to apply for a Licence as set out in the Sanction and Control of Competitions Regulations.~~

#### Step 5 to Step 6 and Step 6 to Step 7

The promotion and relegation of Clubs between Steps 5, 6 and 7 shall be dealt with as follows.

Movement of Clubs between Steps 5, 6 and 7, where a League operates at each Step, shall be included in their constitutional rules and regulations. Irrespective of any provision contained within the Rules, the Clubs finishing in bottom position in each of the fourteen Step 5 divisions will be relegated to Step 6 and will not be rerieved, as determined by the LC.

Clubs seeking promotion to Step 5 from a League at Step 6 which is not linked to Step 5, must make application using the prescribed form direct to the Association, copied to their existing League, by 31<sup>st</sup> December in the relevant year. Each application must be accompanied by the agreed application fee, as determined by the LC, which is non refundable.

Clubs seeking promotion to Step 6 from a League at Step 7 which is not linked to Step 6, must make application using the prescribed form direct to the Association, copied to their existing League, by 31<sup>st</sup> December in the relevant year. In order to be considered for promotion Clubs must finish in 1st position in their Step 7 league. If the Club finishing in 1st position does not wish to be promoted or fails to meet the entry criteria then the club finishing in 2nd position will be eligible for promotion. If the club in 2nd position does not seek promotion or fails to meet the entry criteria then clubs down to 5th position may be considered for promotion provided that they meet the appropriate entry criteria. Clubs finishing below 5th position will not be considered for promotion and only one club will be considered from each League. Each application must be accompanied by the agreed application fee, as determined by the LC, which is non refundable.

All promotions and relegations between Steps 5,6 and 7 must be authorised by the LC. All proposed club movements must be submitted to the LC by no later than 8 May 2018.

~~5.3.6.3~~ Where a vacancy occurs within the NLS, ~~the following procedures will apply:-~~ the LC shall decide how such vacancy shall be filled.

~~5.3.1 (a) — Where a Club notifies its decision to resign from its League at the end of the Playing Season, then a vacancy is created on the date the notification of that decision is formally recorded by that League. Such resignation can only be withdrawn by the end of that Playing Season with the consent of the Board of that League.~~

~~In all cases, that club is treated as a relegated club. The final table of that division is not affected.~~

~~In cases where the vacancy is created prior to the end of the Playing Season, the vacancy will be filled by the best ranked Club in that same division.~~

~~In cases where the vacancy is created after the end of the Playing Season but before the League's AGM, the vacancy will be filled in accordance with Regulation 5.3.2 below.~~

~~5.3.1 (b) — Where, during the course of the Playing Season, a Club notifies its decision to resign from its League with immediate effect or where a Club is removed from the League for any other reason, then the playing record of that Club will be expunged and a vacancy is created on the date the resignation or removal is formally recorded by that League.~~

~~In all such cases that Club is treated as a relegated Club and the vacancy will be filled by the best ranked Club in that same division.~~

~~5.3.2 — Where a vacancy occurs at Step 1 following the completion of a Playing Season the best ranked Club in a relegation position in that division is rerieved.~~

~~Where a vacancy occurs at Steps 2 and 3 following the completion of a Playing Season the best ranked Club in a relegation position across the particular Step is rerieved. The ranking to be determined by the average points gained per game played and comparable league position. The Club with the highest average shall be rerieved first. In the event of Clubs having an identical record the Club to be rerieved shall be determined by the LC.~~

~~Where a vacancy arises and clubs at Step 4 are to be reprieved and all Step 4 Leagues have a full complement of clubs at the end of the Playing Season, the four clubs finishing second to bottom in the Northern Premier and Southern Leagues and the two clubs finishing third from bottom in the Isthmian League each Step 4 division would be ranked by the average points per game played. In the event of all of the above six clubs being reprieved and there are further vacancies available the next two places would be allocated to the clubs finishing second to bottom in the Isthmian League ranked on the average points per game played.~~

~~Where a vacancy arises and clubs at Step 4 are to be reprieved but for whatever reason a Step 4 division does not have its full complement of clubs at the end of the Playing Season then clubs to be reprieved will be determined by the Leagues Committee in its sole discretion.~~

~~5.3.3~~ 6.3.1 Where a vacancy occurs after the date of a League AGM then a League is not able to replace the Club(s) concerned for the following Playing Season.

~~5.3.4~~ 6.3.2 In the event that for any reason whatsoever there are more vacancies in a division before the end of a Playing Season than relegation places in that division, the question of relegation and reprieves shall be dealt with at the sole discretion of the LC.

~~5.4~~ 6.4 Only internal changes to the constitution of a League are allowed following the holding of a League's Annual General Meeting.

~~5.5~~ 6.5 Clubs are not allowed to enter into a ground share agreement in order to gain promotion or to retain membership at a particular Step where the Club has failed to attain or maintain the relevant Grade.

~~5.6~~ 6.6 Ground grading requirements will be in accordance with the Rules.

In order to be considered for promotion, the following requirements will apply.

Step 1 - Clubs must comply fully with the requirements of Grade A.

Step 2 - Clubs competing at Step 2 must comply fully with the requirements of Grade B. To be considered for promotion to Step 1 or to be included in the Play Off Matches, Clubs must meet the requirements of Grade B together with any additional requirements by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year in which they seek promotion. Clubs must also attain Grade A by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion.

Step 3 - Clubs competing at Step 3 must comply fully with the requirements of Grade C. To be considered for promotion to Step 2 or to be included in the Play Off Matches, Clubs must meet the requirements of Grade C and attain Grade B by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion.

Step 4 - Clubs competing at Step 4 must comply fully with the requirements of Grade D. To be considered for promotion to Step 3 or to be included in the Play Off Matches, Clubs must meet the requirements of Grade D and attain Grade C by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion.

Step 5 - Clubs competing at Step 5 must comply fully with the requirements of Grade F. To be considered for promotion to Step 4, Clubs must meet the requirements of Grade ~~E D~~ by 31<sup>st</sup> March ~~2019. in the year in which they seek promotion, and attain Grade D by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion.~~

Step 6 - Clubs competing at Step 6 must comply fully with the requirements of Grade G. To be considered for promotion to Step 5 Clubs must meet the requirements of Grade G and attain Grade F by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion.

Step 7 - Clubs competing at Step 7 must comply fully with the minimum requirements in force. To be considered for promotion to Step 6 Clubs must meet the requirements of Grade H and attain Grade G by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion. Clubs can be promoted from Step 7 to 6 without floodlights provided that all other requirements of Grade H are met by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the

Playing Season in which the Club wishes to gain promotion and that the Club has the following in place:-

- Planning permission for floodlights
- Funding applications submitted if required
- Quotations/estimates for the work to be carried out
- A development/business plan
- That by 30<sup>th</sup> September following promotion the floodlights are installed and in working order.

Failure to install floodlights in working order by 30<sup>th</sup> September following promotion will result in a sanction being imposed at the discretion of the League of which the Club is a member. If by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year following promotion the floodlights are still not installed then the Club will be a relegated Club and be dealt with accordingly.

~~5.7 — If a Club is relegated for not achieving the required Grade for the Step at which it is playing it will not be eligible for promotion again until it has attained the required Grade for the Step to which it wishes to be promoted. The Club must have that Grade at 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year in which it seeks promotion.~~

~~5.8(a)~~ 6.7 Where a Club resigns from a League that Club will not be eligible for promotion for at least one Playing Season following the Season in which it resigned.

~~5.8(b) — Where a Club qualifies for promotion and elects not to be promoted then that Club will not be eligible for promotion for at least one Playing Season following the Season in which it elected not to be promoted.~~

## **6.7. The Movement of Clubs within the National League System other than by Promotion or Relegation**

~~6.4~~ 7.1 Movement of a Club from participation in one League to another is not permitted other than by promotion and relegation or otherwise as set out in Rules save with the approval of the LC.

It may be necessary from time to time to move Clubs laterally at the same Step. Each year the LC will consider whether any lateral movements may be necessary at each Step; if so the Clubs likely to be affected shall be notified and given the opportunity to present a case if that Club does not wish to be moved laterally. The final decision shall rest with a sub-committee of the LC. This sub-committee may include members of Step 5 or Step 6 Leagues if appropriate. ~~Any appeal shall be to the LC using members who have not been involved in the original decision. The decision of that appeal shall be final and binding subject only to Arbitration under FA Rule K.~~

In coming to its decision the LC will have regard to any representations made by any party, the distance to be travelled by any Club to be moved compared to the distance travelled in the Playing Season prior to movement; the financial impact on the Club to be moved, the frequency with which the Club has been moved in the past; the number of Clubs both in the division to which the Club is to be moved and in the division from which the Club is moved, and any other matter that it considers to be relevant.

~~6.2~~ 7.2 Any Club ~~proposing~~ wishing to move from one League to another must make application in writing to The Association on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March in each year to be effective for the following Playing Season. In the event of such application being successful the League from which the Club is moving shall not levy a financial penalty on that Club.

~~6.3 (f)~~ 7.3 (i) If a Club (whether a Members' Club or a Company) is wound up, liquidated, or is removed from its League or withdraws from football competition ('the Former Club'), and a new Club ('the New Club') is established which wishes to be placed within the NLS, it will be allowed to make an application only to join a League/division at Step 5 of the NLS unless the Former Club was in either Step 4 or Step 5 when the event which caused it to cease its membership occurred in which case it must re-join the NLS at a minimum of two Steps below the level at which it was at the time the event occurred, or withdrew from football competition, whichever is lower. Where the Former Club was a member of The FA Premier League or Football League then the LC shall at its absolute discretion determine in which League the New Club shall be placed for the



following Playing Season and will set out at its complete discretion the requirements to be met by the New Club.

In order for consideration to be given to the placement in the NLS of the New Club in the following Playing Season, an initial application must be received by the LC by 1st March or within twenty-one days of the Former Club being wound up, liquidated, resigning or being removed from its League or withdrawing from football competition, if such date is later than 1st March.

The full application accompanied by all necessary documents including evidence of security of tenure having been granted to the New Club and affiliation to a County Football Association must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> March or within twenty-one days of the Former Club being wound up, liquidated, resigning or being removed from its League or withdrawing from football competition, if such date is later than 1st March. The application shall be copied to the League of which membership is being requested. The application will be determined by the LC.

In considering any application, the LC will set out at its sole discretion the requirements to be met by the New Club.

In the event of more than one application being received within twenty-one days of the Former Club being wound up, liquidated, resigning or being removed from its League or withdrawing from football competition, the LC will consider at its discretion which application will be considered in accordance with this Regulation.

~~6.3 (ii)~~ 7.3 (ii) If a Club is removed from its League and wishes to remain in the NLS it shall apply to the LC within five working days of it receiving written notification of its removal from its League. The LC will consider such application and will place the Club in what it considers at its sole discretion to be the most appropriate League/division for the following Playing Season.

6.4 7.4 If a Club (whether a Members' Club or a Company) ceases to be a member of its league and that Club (that is not a New Club as defined at 6.3 above) wishes to be placed within the NLS for the immediately following Playing Season, then unless otherwise determined by the LC, it may be allowed to make an application to join a League/division below the most recent League/division of which the Club was a member.

In order for consideration to be given to the placement in the NLS by the Club in the immediately following Playing Season, an initial application must be received by the LC in accordance with the procedures set out at 6.3 above. The application shall be copied to the League of which membership is being requested. The application will be determined by the LC at its absolute discretion.

In considering any application, the LC will set out at its sole discretion the requirements to be met by the Club in determining whether to approve the application.

~~6.5~~ 7.5 If two or more Clubs ("the Merging Clubs") are proposing a transaction or series of transactions that result in the merging or consolidation ("the Proposed Merger") of those Clubs into one Club ("the Merged Club") then a formal application to do so must be received by the LC and the league(s) of which the Merging Clubs are members by 31<sup>st</sup> December to be valid for the following Playing Season.

A Deed of Agreement, which shall be legally binding on all parties must be submitted to The Association by 31<sup>st</sup> March in the year immediately following receipt of the application. The LC shall determine at its absolute discretion where the Merged Club is to be included in the NLS for the following Playing Season subject to the provisions of item 6.5.5 below.

In arriving at its decision the LC may apply the following minimum criteria:

- 67.5.1 The requirements of Standardised Rule 2.9 for the current Playing Season must be met by each of the Merging Clubs. If one or more of the Merging Clubs is subject to an insolvency event then Standardised Rule 2.9.2 shall be applied to such club(s), otherwise Standardised Rule 2.9.1 shall be applied;
- 67.5.2 The proposed playing name of the Merged Club must be acceptable to the LC; and

- 67.5.3 The Merged Club must have security of tenure to a ground that meets the relevant ground grading requirements;
- 67.5.4 Any other criteria that the LC may from time to time deem to be appropriate;
- 67.5.5 The Merged Club will ordinarily be placed at the lower of the Steps at which the Merging Clubs ended the Playing Season in which the application is made. For the purposes of this Regulation, if one of the Merging Clubs has finished that Playing Season in a relegation place, then they will be deemed to have ended the Playing Season at the Step to which they would have been relegated without the Proposed Merger proceeding.

Any decision regarding whether a proposed transaction or series of transactions falls to be considered under this Regulation shall be determined by the LC at its absolute discretion

## **7.8. Placement of a Club into a League**

- 7.8.1 Usually a club can only enter the NLS at Step 7. However, a League may seek approval from the LC to receive a club not currently in membership of a League within the NLS provided that there is: (a) exceptional circumstances, (b) a vacancy within its constitution (c) the club meets the entry criteria and (d) promotion and relegation issues have been satisfied. Such request must be received from the League by no later than 1<sup>st</sup> February. Any decision shall only be capable of Appeal to The FA by the affected League.
- 7.8.2 Reserve teams, including a team from a club or Club which is not considered by the LC to be sufficiently separate from another club or Club, will not be permitted to compete above Step 6 in the NLS. There must be a minimum of two Steps between a first and reserve team. This does not apply at Steps 6 & 7. No two teams from the same Club can play at the same Step. Reserve teams currently at Step 5 can remain unless relegated, once relegated they will not be permitted to be promoted back to Step 5.
- 7.8.3 Teams from Higher Education or Further Education establishments are not permitted to compete above Step 5. This does not prevent any such establishment forming a Club which complies with all entry criteria and which is separate from the establishment itself.
- 7.8.4 Where a Club moves from one League to another, for whatever reason, the League from which it is being moved must provide the League to which the Club is being moved with a certificate confirming that the Club being moved does not owe any money or other property of any nature to the League from which it is being moved. The Club being moved cannot compete in its new League until such certificate has been provided and the onus will be on the Club being moved to ensure that it has cleared all indebtedness to its previous League.

## **8.9. Procedures for the Determination of any Matter, Dispute or Difference by the Leagues Committee**

- 8.9.1 The LC may adopt such procedures for the determination of any matter, dispute or difference as it considers appropriate and expedient, having regard to the aims and objectives set out at Regulation 4.2. The LC may require the attendance at a meeting or the written observations of any League or Club, as it considers appropriate to assist its determination.
- 8.9.2(a) Any dispute or difference between a League and a Club relating to promotion and relegation issues, lateral movement and/or other eligibility criteria must be referred for determination to the LC; such determination shall be final and binding subject only to Arbitration in accordance with Rule K.
- 8.9.2(b) Any decision of the LC shall be subject to a right of appeal to an Appeal Board. The decision of that Appeal Board shall be final and binding on all parties.

All referrals of appeals shall be conducted in accordance with the Regulations for Football Association Appeals save for appeals in relation to Ground Grading decisions where the procedures are outlined in 8.2(c) below.

### **8.9.2(c) Procedures for Ground Grading Appeals**

- (i) The ratification of the Ground Grading decision must be sent in writing within 14 days of the final decision date, currently 31st March.
- (ii) Appeals in relation to Ground Grading Appeals must be submitted to The FA Judicial Services Department within seven days from the date of the written decision outlining the Grounds of Appeal, with a copy to The FA Leagues & Clubs Department.
- (iii) The Ground Grading Technical Panel will appear before an Appeal Board with the Appellant to respond to the application and there is no requirement to make a formal response in writing.
- (iv) In all cases the Ground Grading Technical Panel will submit any documentation including the Ground Grading report that was considered by the Ground Grading Technical Panel in relation to the Ground Grading decision, (which the appellant would already have received).
- (v) Dates would be set annually in advance by the Judicial Services Department for the hearing of Ground Grading appeals and details of the dates would be notified to all Clubs in the correspondence from the Ground Grading Technical Panel notifying the decision of the Ground Grading assessment.
- (vi) All Ground Grading Appeals are to be heard by the end of April each year.

**8 9.3** The LC may, at its discretion, delegate the resolution of any matter, dispute or difference arising under these Regulations to any body it considers to be appropriate (including a sub-committee or commission which may include members of council not on the LC or a body constituted by a County Football Association).

## **9 10. Arbitration**

The fact of participation in the NLS and signifying agreement to be bound by the Regulations shall constitute an agreement between each League and Club to refer to Arbitration any challenge in law arising out of, or in relation to, the Regulations in accordance with the provisions of FA Rule K.

## **10 11. Precedence**

In the case of conflict between the Regulations for the Operation of the National League System and the Rules, the Regulations take precedence.

**LEAGUES/DIVISIONS AT STEPS 5, 6 & 7 OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM  
(season 2017/2018)**