

AGE DISPENSATION PROCEDURE

BACKGROUND

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 GRADES?

No.

In the above example, no dispensation is required for the player turning 15 to play in the Under 16 age group.

In exceptional circumstances, a competition manager (or other person designated by the State Union) may, based on the results of the assessment process contained within these procedures 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 mandate that a player move within their eligible grades i.e. move an Under 15 player to the Under 16 age group. This discretion is only to be exercised in circumstances where the player’s participation in their current or preferred age grade is deemed to present a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants.

WITH DISPENSATION – WHERE CAN A PLAYER PLAY?

The Australian Rugby Participation Policy caters for dispensation outside the eligible 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, the player turning 15 in the relevant calendar year (1 January – 31 December) 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 (1 January – 31 December) may receive dispensation to play in an Under 18 competition.

In exceptional circumstances - this may include where competitions are set in two-year age group gaps (i.e. Under 12, Under 14, Under 16 etc.) - a competition manager (or other person designated by the State or Territory Union) may, based on the results of the assessment process contained within these procedures 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 mandate that a player move outside their eligible grades i.e. move an Under 15 player to the Under 17 age group or Under 14 age group. This discretion is only to be exercised in circumstances where the player’s participation in their current or preferred age grade is deemed to present a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This procedure is applicable to all registered players participating or wishing to participate in age grade competitions between Under 8 and Under 18 except for the non-contact form of Rugby, VIVA7s.

Each State or Territory Union must designate an appropriate person(s) to apply this procedure within a competition. The competition manager will typically be the person responsible; however, the State or Territory Union may nominate an alternate person and/or convene an advisory panel or group of subject matter experts to provide recommendations and/or make decisions in the application of this procedure.

It is the responsibility of all Coaches, Club Officials, Unions and Affiliates and Parents / Guardians to ensure that Rugby is as safe, fair and inclusive as possible. Primary regard must be given to the Australian Rugby Safety Policy.

STEP BY STEP PROCEDURES

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	<p>The starting point for activating this Age Dispensation Procedure should be the physical development of the player, relative to their eligible age grades.</p> <p>The below process may be instigated via any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a request for assessment from a player who is seeking dispensation (or their parent / guardian); OR • a player falling outside standard weight and, if applicable, height guidelines as published by the ARU, or where no guidelines are published by the ARU, the relevant Union; OR • observations of an accredited coach; OR • a request made to the competition manager for an assessment of a player by a Club / School Official; OR • at the discretion of the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative). 	<p>Accredited Coach / Club or School Official / Parent or Guardian / Competition Manager</p>
2	<p>Where a player is requesting dispensation, the Club / School will provide the player (or their parent / guardian) with the Age Dispensation Consent Form and Dispensation Schedule A . Please note: step 6 below where the player proposes to play in the <u>Front Row</u> (prop or hooker).</p>	<p>Club / School</p>
3	<p>The Age Dispensation Consent Form is completed and provided to the competition manager who will then provide the Dispensation Schedule A to the Club / School for the assessment process to be undertaken.</p> <p>Where the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) instigates the process, they will simply provide the Schedule A to the Club/School for assessment.</p>	<p>Parent / Guardian</p>

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
4	A qualified Assessing Coach is designated by the Club/School to assess the physical development, ability and / or experience of the player relative to the proposed playing age group. An Assessing Coach must hold a minimum Level 2 Accreditation and current Smart Rugby.	Club / School
5	Assessment is undertaken with prescribed field based tests and Rugby match assessment.	Qualified Assessing Coach
6	<p>Dispensation Schedule A is completed by the assessing coach and returned to the Club / School with a recommendation of the appropriate age grade for the participant.</p> <p>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 the ARU prior to participation in rugby, as outlined in Schedule B* - Exception for Front Row.</p> <p><i>*Not required for Sevens Rugby.</i></p>	Qualified Assessing Coach
7	Dispensation Schedule A (and Schedule B if required) along with the Age Dispensation Consent Form are forwarded to the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative).	Club / School
8	<p>The competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) will review the assessment and either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accept or decline the Age Dispensation application; OR • request independent assessment in line with the Australian Rugby Safety Policy and the Australian Rugby Participation Policy before making any decision; OR • make a recommendation to the player (or their parent/guardian) as to the appropriate age grade for that player based on the initial assessment or the subsequent independent assessment; OR • 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 mandated to participate in a specific age group (either within or outside the player’s eligible age grades) based on the original assessment or the subsequent independent assessment where their participation presents a substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants. 	Competition Manager

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
9	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 mandated to move age grades, the player and their parent/guardian must be consulted as to the reasons for the recommendation.	Competition Manager/State Union Head of Game Development
10	The Head of Game Development (or another person nominated by the CEO of the State or Territory Union) may, in exceptional circumstances, mandate that a player participate 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 substantial safety risk to themselves or other participants.	State Union Head of Game Development (or another person nominated by the CEO of the Union)
11	Appropriate changes are made in the Competition Management System (Rugby Link) to enable participation in the approved age grade. This may include the remittance / refund of any conversion fees applicable to the player or their Parent / Guardian	Competition Manager
12	The Club / School is notified as well as the Parent / Guardian.	Competition Manager

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Coaches and Club / School officials and Unions have a duty of care and are bound by this Policy and the Australian Rugby Safety Policy to ensure that players are playing in the appropriate age grade competition based on the player’s physical development in conjunction with their ability and / or experience.
- It is an obligation under the Australian Rugby Code of Conduct for all participants to comply with the Australian Rugby Participation and its related policies and guidelines – which includes this Age Dispensation Procedure. Intentional or reckless disregard for these policies and procedures **may result in disciplinary action pursuant to the Australian Rugby Code of Conduct or the Australian Rugby Member Protection Policy.**
- Any grievance by players (or their parents/guardians) regarding decisions made under this Age Dispensation Procedure must be dealt with pursuant to the grievance procedure of the relevant Union with jurisdiction for the competition.
- The ARU has the discretion to review any decision made in accordance with this Age Dispensation Procedure and/or conduct an investigation as appropriate.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Australian Rugby Code of Conduct
- Age Dispensation Consent Form
- Dispensation Schedule A and Schedule B
- Australian Rugby Safety Policy
- Australian Rugby Participation Policy
- Australian Rugby Member Protection Policy
- [Junior Age Grade/Senior Rugby Guidelines Table](#)