

Step 3 to 6 subsidiary Competitions Guidance Notes March 2021

INTRODUCTION

Following the announcement on 24 February 2021 detailing the curtailment to the 2020/21 league season at Steps 3 to 6 of the National League System (“the NLS”), a number of queries have been received from Leagues within the NLS, Clubs and County FA’s in relation to the potential for subsidiary Competitions being created in order to allow Clubs at this level of the game to gradually return to organised football.

At the time of writing, the potential dates for the lifting of restrictions in relation to a return of spectators are not clarified for ‘recreational sport’, which is relevant to Steps 3 to 6. The following guidance therefore sites only the operational matters of games being played. Clubs and Leagues are advised to reference any future Coronavirus guidance set out by The FA and/or DCMS.

For the avoidance of doubt, all proposed Competitions or fixtures for teams in the National League System at Steps 3-6 must be completed by 31st May

Set out within this document are some considerations and guidance for Leagues and Clubs who may be seeking to introduce Competitions or fixtures which are categorised as follows:

Category 1. League Cup Competition in its existing sanctioned format (using existing member Clubs)

Category 2. Alternative competition ran by a League (for example: to a ‘Champions League’ style group format);

(a) with existing member Clubs only

(b) with some Clubs not in membership of the League

Category 3. County Cups

Category 4. Club-led competition/cup

Category 5. Friendly fixtures (one-off games)

The following information is aimed at providing the framework for games to be played during this period and all stakeholders are asked to ensure all aspects have been considered before progressing.

Clubs are reminded that they must always follow the FA and DCMS Guidance and ensure they undertake and review the relevant risk assessments. Clubs must always also abide by any spectator limits in force. These may be altered from time to time by a clubs Local Authority.

SANCTIONING OF A COMPETITION

Under FA Rules a Competition must be sanctioned. The following table identifies the sanctioning route for Competitions proposed to be played between March 29th (or any proposed start date) and May 31st 2021. All fixtures must be completed by May 31st 2021.

Category	Sanctioning Authority
1. League Cup in its existing sanctioned format (using existing member Clubs)	The Sanctioning Authority is The FA , but this is already covered under the 2020/21 sanction, provided a League included this with their submission. If this is the route the League is taking, please confirm to NLS@TheFA.com
2. New Competition to be run by a League (for example: to a 'Champions League' style group format); (a) with existing member Clubs only (b) with some Clubs not in membership of the League	The FA would sanction any new Competition. Notice of the intention to hold a new Competition must be emailed to sanctioning@TheFA.com and copy to NLS@TheFA.com at least 14 days prior to its proposed start date. Details needed to sanction a new Competition will then be provided.
3. County Cups	The relevant County FA ^
4. Club-led competition/cup	The relevant County FA * ^
5. Friendly fixtures (one-off games)	N/A The County FA in which a game is to be played should be notified of a proposed fixture.

* Relevant County FA is determined by the County with the highest number of participating teams

^ When sanctioning the Competition, the County FA should notify all relevant parties (including match officials) of the correct Competition name. This will aid with the smooth operation of any cases of misconduct that are to be reported.

PLAYER STATUS (CONTRACTS AND REGISTRATIONS)

PLAYER CONTRACTS	
End date	<p>A player is contracted until:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the first Saturday in May, or the <u>First team's last competitive</u> fixture, whichever is the later; or 30th June <p>For Contracted Players Category 1 competitions would be classified as First team competitive fixtures.</p> <p>All other categories (2-5 as above) would be classified as non-first team fixtures.</p>
Financial liabilities	<p>Any games in Category 1 competitions for the period beyond the first Saturday in May would extend the contract until such time as the Club had played its final fixture. Both the player and the club would need to meet their obligations under the terms of the contract.</p>
PLAYER REGISTRATIONS	
When does a Registration lapse?	<p>Contract registration will expire in line with the contract end date and provisions (eg. If the club's last game is post first Saturday in May).</p> <p>Loan registrations will expire in line with the loan end date on the submitted documentation. Clubs are encouraged to ensure approval is sought for participation in any subsidiary competition.</p> <p>Non-contract registrations will lapse at the end of the playing season (31st May 2021)</p>
Can Clubs register new players?	<p>Players must be registered with the club on or before the fourth Thursday in March (25th) or the specified deadline by the League.</p>
TRANSFERS	
Can players transfer between Clubs and how does this work?	<p>Players can transfer in the usual manner for contract and non contract players up to and including the fourth Thursday in March (25th) or the specified deadline by the League.</p>

MATCH OFFICIALS

Match Official appointments	<p>For any League wishing to run their cup competitions or one of an alternative format (Category 1 and 2), officials would be appointed by the League in the normal manner.</p> <p>If you are a club who are organising games/tournaments you would need to source your own officials. This can be done with support of your County FA or your local appointments officer.</p>
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DISCIPLINE

Step 3 and 4 Clubs – Category 1 Competitions	<p>If a Step 3 or 4 Club plays in a Category 1 fixture (the League Cup of which it is the League they are a member of) this will be classed as a 1st team fixture and discipline will be processed centrally by The FA.</p>
Step 5 and 6 Clubs – Category 1 Competitions	<p>If a Step 5 or 6 Club plays in a Category 1 fixture (the League Cup of which it is the League they are a member of) this will be classed as a 1st team fixture and discipline will be processed by the County FA.</p>
All other Categories of Competition/matches	<p>All other fixtures in any Category of Competition / Format will have the discipline managed by the appropriate County FA. These fixtures will not be classed as first team fixtures and so any fixtures would not count towards any suspensions being served.</p>
Match Officials reporting misconduct	<p>On the basis that Step 3 & 4 Leagues are not operating with League Cup Competitions, all other Competitions fall under the jurisdiction of the relevant County FA(s) from a discipline perspective.</p> <p>When a Competition is sanctioned by a County FA, they should make match officials aware of the correct Competition name to aid with the smooth operation of the reporting of any misconduct.</p>