



RFU

RETURN TO RUGBY ACTIVITY

AGE GRADE CHANGES v.2

Dated: 23rd MARCH 2021

ROADMAP - AGE GRADE CHANGES (v.2 dated 23rd March 2021)

The Return to Rugby Roadmap released in March 2021 includes specific changes that support the return of Age Grade Rugby to the end of the current 2020-21 season, out of season 2021 and next season 2021-22. These are to balance players safely getting back to contact with providing playing opportunities after the long lay-off.

1. The process for 17-year-olds playing adult rugby is suspended until 1st January 2022.

This means that 17 year olds will not be able to play adult contact rugby from now until January 2022. Non-contact rugby is still permitted. This includes players with an existing dispensation.

These are some of the players at greatest safety and retention risk due to the rugby they have missed – they will not have played a full contact game for over 12 months. They need to train and play with their peer group to prepare them for any adult contact rugby. This will affect some clubs at adult level, but the long-term safety and participation picture outweighs the short-term impact.

We are looking at how this regulation would apply to combined U18/U19 teams and will confirm shortly.

2. The end of the 2020-21 age grade season is extended to 31st May 2021.

This means that rugby activity is permitted during May 2021 in line with the current stage on the Return to Rugby Roadmap and guidance.

This aims to support players, clubs, schools and colleges to return to rugby activity. The priority is friendly fixtures that maximise the number of players safely getting out on a rugby pitch, rather than focus on the match result. Consideration of other sports participation and Year 11/13 academic assessments is important.

3. The Age Grade out of season regulations are suspended for 2021. An RFU Age Grade Summer Activity Framework will be followed in its place.

The programme to be followed will maintain the player safety/retention focus and ensure an age grade off-season period remains in 2021. For those providing activity, it will enable more match opportunities and contact skills development than a normal out-of-season.

The framework will cover all aspects of age grade training and playing activity (including CB, DPP and Rugby Camps) and be designed to support player safety, contact preparation and player retention. It is being developed currently and **will be released on Friday 9th April 2021.**

4. The shift to the next set of age group rules is delayed until 1 January 2022.

We need to ensure players and coaches do not miss vital building blocks for a safe and manageable introduction to the full contact game. The rules delay means, as an example, U9s in 2020-21 still become U10s in 2021-22 but will play U9 rules from September to December and U10 rules from January. This will also be the case throughout the boys-only age groups at U12 onwards.

Girls in U13, U15 and U18 multi-age bands will move as usual to that band and play those rules through 2021-22. We will provide a specific training/playing guide to ensure safe player progression and transition.

We will work during Spring 2021 on a plan with schools and the wider game to support players who may not have an opportunity to play rugby after Christmas.

