

Referee Grading and the Referee Grading Tiers

An overview of the referee grading process and grading tiers used by Sydney West RRA

What is the purpose of grading and the grading tiers?

It is a simple fact that some types of matches are more difficult to control than others, or they are played at a faster speed or with greater intensity than others. Just as differences exist between match types, it is also a fact that referees are not all the same. Referees are individuals and as such have different strengths and weaknesses, skills and knowledge, experience and ability not to mention wide ranging levels of physical fitness, speed and endurance.

In recognition of these many differences, the association grades each active referee into one of six separate groups. These groups are referred to as "grading tiers". Allocating each referee to a grading tier assists the NSWRU Central Appointments Officer and our VP Training & Development to more precisely match the anticipated degree of difficulty of an upcoming fixture with the wide range of experience, fitness and refereeing ability available across the pool of Sydney West RRA members.

How are the grading tiers applied in practice?

The connection between the degree of difficulty of the various match types and the referee grading tiers is summarised in two different ways in the tables below. The list provided at **Annexure A** summarises the match types to which referees in each of the six grading tiers will normally be appointed. The list at **Annexure B** identifies the minimum grading tier a referee is required to possess in order to be considered for appointment to a particular match type.

Referees are usually appointed to matches at or below their tier level. On occasions a referee will be appointed to a match normally associated with a different grading tier. This may be for development purposes for the individual in question or it could be to cover a shortfall in the number of available referees at that other tier level.

The grading of referees is integral to the referee appointments process. In Sydney West RRA responsibility for the grading of members is vested in our Referee Coach Group (RCG). The RCG is chaired by the VP Training & Development and it meets monthly during the season to discuss the grading process and to review the appropriateness of each active referee's grading tier. As a result of these reviews the grading of some referees may move up, while others may move down.

Following each RCG review, a list of active referees and their current grading tier is circulated for the information of all Sydney West members. A copy of the grading list is also published on the **Resource Library Index** page of our website.

What recourse do I have if I don't agree with my grading tier?

To be allocated to a particular grading tier, a referee must demonstrate that he or she is capable of handling the highest level match type in that tier. For example, as can be seen at Annexure B, matches in the under 15A age group are rated at the Tier 1 degree of difficulty. However, in order to allocate a referee a Tier 1 grading, the RCG must be satisfied that the referee has the ability to handle matches at the Junior Opens and under 16A degree of difficulty.

Most would agree that matches in the Junior Opens and the under 16A age groups are noticeably faster, usually more competitive and arguably more difficult to manage than games in the under 15A age group (which carries the same Tier 1 match rating).

If through an observed lack of physical fitness or for some other reason the RCG considers that a referee is not currently capable of handling the highest level match type in a particular grading tier, it will re-grade that referee into a more appropriate tier.

If, after honestly evaluating their refereeing performances, a Sydney West member feels that the grading tier to which they've been attached is not appropriate, they are encouraged to contact our VP Training & Development, Callum Winchester, on 0406 089 444 to discuss their concerns. If necessary, Callum will arrange for an experienced referee coach to observe and assess that referee's on-field performance and report back to the RCG.

Rugby AU Guidelines for Match Officials Under 17 Years of Age

When considering the appointment of match officials under 17 years of age, the restrictions detailed on the accreditation policies page of the Rugby Australia website must also be taken into account. For convenience, Rugby Australia's guidelines in connection with the appointment of referees and assistant referees who are under 17 years of age are quoted below.

"No Referee under the age of 17 should be appointed to a 15s match within 2 years below their own age group e.g. if a referee is in the U15 age group, they may appointed to referee the U13s and below.

No Referee under the age of 17 should be appointed to a 7s match at a level above their own age group. e.g. if a referee is in the U15 age group, they may appointed to referee the U15s and below.

No Assistant Referee under the age of 17 should be appointed to a match more than 2 years above their own age group. e.g. if a referee is in the U13 age group, they may be appointed to assistant referee in the U15s and below.

Exceptions to the above may be made in rare cases where a referee may benefit from a development experience in a controlled environment with appropriate support from ARs and referee coaches. Under no circumstances may a referee be regularly appointed outside of these guidelines."

Matters related to grading that all members need to know

1. Members who are new to refereeing and others for whom a precise grading tier has not yet been determined, will initially be allocated to Tier 6. Following an assessment of their on-field performance by a referee coach, referees will be re-graded in accordance with their demonstrated proficiency, fitness level and development requirements.
2. On occasions, a second or third grading assessment may be required for some new referees prior to them progressing to the next stage of their development.
3. A referee assessed as being suited to refereeing the under 6 to under 9 age groups only will maintain their Tier 6 grading.
4. RKR Pathway referees can only be appointed to the under 6 to under 12 age groups. RKR Pathway referees can therefore be graded into Tiers 4, 5 and 6 only. That is, into one of the three grading tiers applicable to the Pathway age groups.
5. Accredited referees (i.e. those holding or seeking Rugby AU level 1 accreditation or higher) can be appointed to games across all match types and all age groups. An accredited referee can, therefore, be graded into any of the Tiers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
6. A Sydney West RRA member whose referee accreditation has lapsed or for whom an essential certification such as Smart Rugby has expired, will be allocated a Tier 6 grading until such time as those deficiencies have been rectified. Only then will that referee be considered for appointment to matches.

Sydney West Rugby Referees Association

association website: <http://www.sydneystrugbyrefs.org.au/>

MATCH TYPE	MATCH TYPE BY REFEREE TIER LEVEL					
	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5	Tier 6
Senior Law (adult players)	X	X				
Junior Law (Under 19 Rugby)						
Junior Opens U.19, U.18, U.17	X					
Under 16A	X					
Under 16B	X					
Under 16C and lower	X	X				
Under 15A	X					
Under 15B	X	X				
Under 15C and lower	X	X				
Under 14A	X	X				
Under 14B	X	X	X			
Under 14C and lower	X	X	X			
Under 13A	X	X	X			
Under 13B	X	X	X			
Under 13C and lower	X	X	X			
RKR Pathway Law (U.6 to U.12)						
Under 12A	X	X	X	X		
Under 12B	X	X	X	X		
Under 12C and lower	X	X	X	X		
Under 11A	X	X	X	X		
Under 11B	X	X	X	X	X	
Under 11C and lower	X	X	X	X	X	
Under 10A	X	X	X	X		
Under 10B	X	X	X	X	X	
Under 10C and lower	X	X	X	X	X	
Under 9	X	X	X	X	X	X
Under 8	X	X	X	X	X	X
Under 7	X	X	X	X	X	X
Under 6	X	X	X	X	X	X

NOTE: Referees appointed to senior law matches and to matches in the under 13 to under 19 age groups must hold full and current referee accreditation (i.e. Rugby AU level 1 referee accreditation or higher). Referees holding full accreditation may also be appointed to RKR Pathway matches.

The minimum requirement to referee matches in the under 8 to under 12 age groups is attendance at the Refereeing Kids Rugby U8-U12 course together with a pass in the online Refereeing Kids Rugby law exam.

It is a mandatory requirement of Rugby Australia that **all** active referees **MUST** hold current Smart Rugby certification. Without it they cannot and will not be appointed to matches.

MATCH TYPE	MINIMUM TIER LEVEL REQUIRED TO REFEREE MATCH TYPE (referees will normally be appointed to matches at or below their tier level)					
	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5	Tier 6
Senior Law (adult players)		X				
Junior Law (Under 19 Rugby)						
Junior Opens U.19, U.18, U.17	X					
Under 16A	X					
Under 16B	X					
Under 16C and lower		X				
Under 15A	X					
Under 15B		X				
Under 15C and lower		X				
Under 14A		X				
Under 14B			X			
Under 14C and lower			X			
Under 13A			X			
Under 13B			X			
Under 13C and lower			X			
RKR Pathway Law (U.6 to U.12)						
Under 12A				X		
Under 12B				X		
Under 12C and lower				X		
Under 11A				X		
Under 11B					X	
Under 11C and lower					X	
Under 10A				X		
Under 10B					X	
Under 10C and lower					X	
Under 9						X
Under 8						X
Under 7						X
Under 6						X

NOTE: Referees appointed to senior law matches and to matches in the under 13 to under 19 age groups must hold full and current referee accreditation (i.e. Rugby AU level 1 referee accreditation or higher). Referees holding full accreditation may also be appointed to Pathway matches.

The minimum requirement to referee matches in the under 8 to under 12 age groups is completion of the Referee Ready course and current Smart Rugby certification. For U10-U12 matches it is the Referee Ready course together with a pass in the online law exam.

It is a mandatory requirement of Rugby Australia that **all** active referees **MUST** hold current Smart Rugby certification. Without it they cannot and will not be appointed to matches.