

RFL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2024

AGENDA 6.0 – CLUB GRADING CRITERIA 2025

1.0 OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This paper confirms the changes to the Club Grading Criteria model for 2025.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 We collated feedback on the grading process and suggestions for changes to the model throughout the 2024 grading process. Previous papers have been shared with clubs regarding proposed changes and presentations have been made to Council on this subject over the last 12 months. There was a previous recommendation to update the digital thresholds, and this was deferred until the 2025 season. Following discussions at the last Council meeting we have held six hours of consultation with clubs, this has taken the format of open online Microsoft Teams sessions.
- 2.2 The changes to the Club Grading Criteria model in 2025 are within the existing structure of the grading model. The changes relate to how the scores in those areas are achieved, the thresholds to be met, and how they will be measured. There are no changes to points totals by pillar or areas within a pillar.

3.0 2025 GRADING MODEL CHANGES

- 3.1 In 2025 changes will be made to Fandom, Stadium, Community and Minimum Standards.
- 3.2 Under Fandom changes will be made to Digital. In 2023 it was acknowledged that the original digital thresholds needed to be reworked. The initial thresholds were built into the illustrative Grading Criteria for 2023 before IMG had access to all digital data for clubs. As a result, the Engagement and Website scores were based on third party data that estimated scores for club social media accounts. After reviewing additional data from another season, IMG suggested new digital thresholds, which were then presented to the clubs at the Council meeting following approval by the RFL Board. Following feedback from clubs at Council it was decided to postpone the introduction of new Digital thresholds until the 2025 season. With now two seasons of data to review and additional feedback from clubs the following changes to Digital will be made in 2025.

SOCIAL FOLLOWING		POINTS	TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS		POINTS	WEBSITE VISITS		POINTS
FOLLOWING THRESHOLDS	>300k	0.15	ENGAGEMENT THRESHOLDS	>20m	0.6	WEB VISITS THRESHOLDS	>2m	0.375
	>200k	0.1		>10m	0.4		>1m	0.25
	>100k	0.05		>2m	0.2		>500k	0.125
	>25k	0.025		>500k	0.1		>100k	0.1
	10% YoY Growth	0.05		10% YoY Growth	0.2		10% YoY Growth	0.125

Social Following and Total Engagements scores - across Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok and YouTube added together to get the threshold.

Date range to be measured: a year up to the date of submission of the grading data capture form.

3.3 Under Fandom changes will be made to Viewership. This change will reflect the new broadcast deals with Sky Sports and the BBC and the launch of the new SuperLeague+ streaming platform. The model will be changed in 2025 to measure Viewership as follows:

- Use 1 year of data (latest season e.g. for 2026 season grading, season 2025 audience data will be used).
- TV Average Match Audience (regular season) BBC and Sky Sports.

Points in the 2025 grading model will be allocated as follows:

- Not on TV at all = 0.5 points.
- On any TV or streamed platform (e.g. Sky Sports+, SuperLeague+, L'Equipe+, BBC3, iPlayer, YouTube, Club Owned TV channel) = 0.75 points (regular season, 5 or more games, stream to be of 6 match camera production or better, with commentary).
- The 6 clubs with the highest Average Match Audience = 1.0 points.

3.4 Under Stadium Facilities Score a stadium development exemption will be introduced. If you have commenced stadium re-development and this will affect you score negatively on the data capture form return date, you will receive your previous Facilities Score points for a maximum of two years. In addition, under Stadium, changes will be made to LED Perimeter Advertising Boards and Big Screen as follows:

- Not in place = 0 points.
- In place but does not meet the specification, but does meet the following minimum standard:
 - LED Perimeter Advertising Boards as per specification but height reduced to 600mm. = 0.0625 points.
 - Big Screen 30m2 and pixel pitch 10mm or better. = 0.0625 points.
- In place and meets the specification = 0.125 points.

3.5 Under Community changes will be made to Catchment. The current system remains, but if you sign a Rugby League Development Agreement with another Local Authority District (using the same definition as currently) a club can add that Local Authority District population to its data as long as the agreement remains in place. The acceptance of any Rugby League Development Agreement is subject to RFL approval and activity must be aligned to RFL strategy.

3.6 Under Minimum Standards a change will be made to the treatment of an Insolvency event. A grade deflation will be replaced with a grading points deduction. The rationale being that a Grade A club, moves to Grade B under 'regular' scoring mechanism, suffers an event, moves to Grade C, cannot partake in Super League or a Grade C club suffers an event, has nowhere to go and this could effectively be termination of membership by another route. From 2025 a deduction of 50% of the Finance pillar points score will be made (maximum 2.25 points deduction).

3.7 An additional change for 2025 will be the introduction of penalties for late data capture form and evidence return as follows:

- 0.25 points deduction for a late return of the Data Capture Form.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

4.1 These changes will be reflected in the 2025 Grading Criteria Handbook which will be published at the end of January 2025, ahead of the start of the season.

- 4.2 We will update the Digital Criteria Guide for 2025. We will investigate training workshops for all clubs on how to obtain the digital data required and investigate the possibility of producing the digital data centrally.
- 4.3 We will update the Data Capture Form for 2025.