

COLLEGE RUGBY LEAGUE - COMPETITION RULES 2026/27

1. APPLICABLE OPERATIONAL RULES

- 1.1 College Rugby League (CRL) sits within tier four of the RFL competition structure. All teams participating in the CRL are bound by the RFL Operational Rules and associated policies for Tiers Three and Four.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Entry into the College Rugby League competition is open to all colleges, sixth forms and training providers playing rugby league who meet the RFL mandatory safeguarding requirements.
- 2.2 Applications from new colleges must be submitted in writing to the Competition Officer by the date specified each year. Membership shall be granted to a college for one season only and all colleges must reapply for membership each year.
- 2.3 The annual subscription for membership of a structured league shall be £75 per boys' team. Cup entries and Girls' team entries shall each be subject to a £15 fee per team. Non-heartland boys' teams entering a structured league shall be subject to a reduced league entry fee of £30 per team.
- 2.4 Subscription for membership of the League shall be reviewed annually and paid by 30th October each season. Any team not having paid its annual subscription by 30th October will not be allocated competitive fixtures for the remainder of the season until such fees are paid.
- 2.5 Each College will be required to ensure that the Volunteers listed below are appropriately qualified and registered on GameDay:

Role	Qualifications	Requirement (i.e., per team, per College, present at matches)
Coach (Licensed)	Level 2 Coaching Qualification Valid DBS Safeguarding and Protecting Children Course Coach Confident Course relevant to age groups coached Grassroots Concussion in Sports Guidance – Online module	1 Per Team
Club Welfare Officer	Safeguarding and Protecting Children Course Time to Listen Course Valid DBS	1 Per College
First Aider	HSE approved Emergency First Aid Qualification Grassroots Concussion in Sports Guidance – Online module Valid DBS	1 Per home team in attendance at each match

3. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

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- 3.1 The League competition tables shall be compiled by the RFL, the positions in which shall be determined by the number of competition points gained with points being awarded as follows: two points for each Match won; and one point for each Match drawn.
- 3.2 The team with the highest number of points shall be at the top of the league table and the team with the lowest shall be at the bottom. Where teams have an equal number of points their relative positions shall be determined by points difference so that the team having the greater points difference is placed above the team with the lesser points difference. The points difference is calculated by subtracting the points scored against the team from the points scored by the team. If that still leads to a tie, then the team with the greater points percentage during the Season will be placed in the higher position. The points percentage is calculated by dividing the number of points scored by a team by the number of points it concedes and multiplying by 100. If the positions are still equal, positions will be determined by the toss of a coin which shall be carried out at such time and place as the RFL shall direct and those teams concerned shall be entitled to witness the toss.
- 3.3 Where a fixture is deemed to have been conceded in accordance with Rule 6.7, the result shall be recorded as a 24-0 walkover in favour of the non-offending team, together with a deduction of one competition point from the offending team. The League and participating teams will work to ensure, wherever possible, that fixtures are played, with walkovers only being awarded as a last resort.
- 3.4 If a team withdraws from the League, then the points from the teams remaining fixtures shall be awarded to their opponents in line with Competition Rule 3.3, until they have completed one fixture against all teams within their division. If a team completes more than one fixture against another team within their division, the same method will apply until they have completed two fixtures against all teams within their division.
- 3.5 If a team is expelled or suspended, its record will be expunged, irrespective of how many games that team has played.
- 3.6 The League will operate a top four play-off format for the Premier Division as well as the North West and Yorkshire Regional Divisions. The play-off format will be as follows: 1st v 4th and 2nd v 3rd with the highest placed team having home advantage in the semi-final.
- 3.7 Cup Fixtures**
 - 3.7.1 In accordance with Operational Rule B3:2:2 Cup ties will take precedence over League Matches.
- 4. START AND END DATE OF THE COMPETITION**
 - 4.1 The RFL shall determine the commencement date of its competition and the date upon which it shall cease, these dates will fit between the 1st September and 31st May in any year.
- 5. PLAYER REGISTRATIONS/ELIGIBILITY**

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- 5.1 All players should be registered in accordance with the Operational Rules. There is no restriction on the maximum number of players allowed to register per team in the College League, however fifteen is the minimum number per team and scheduled fixtures will be refused until 15 players are registered.
- 5.2 New players can be signed on 'on the day' using the GameDay system. Teams are responsible for ensuring that a player is eligible to play for them before allowing the player to play. A Competition Officer can be contacted on match day to check a player's eligibility.
- 5.3 All participants in the competition must be recorded on the Individualised Learning Record (ILR) by the institution. They must be on the ILR of the institution which is drawing down funding as a continuing student at the time of the match. Students on the ILR who are registered as completed, withdrawn, or transferred are not eligible to play.
- 5.4 All participants in this competition must be over 16 years of age at midnight on 31st August in the academic year of participation (birth date on or before 31st August 2010). The upper age limit for any participant in this competition is a birth date on or after 1st September 2007.
- 5.5 Any institution submitting false information or playing an ineligible player(s) may be deemed to have conceded the fixture.
- 5.6 Professional players are eligible to play within the CRL Competition and there is no restriction on the number of these players that can register. There is however a restriction on the number of Professional players that a team may play on a match day. The current limit is 5 unless mutually agreed by both sides. The Competition Officer should be made aware of any such agreements prior to the fixture taking place. Professional players should be indicated on the team sheet by placing a 'P' next to the players' name.

6 FIXTURES

- 6.1 All fixtures must be played as scheduled unless an alternative date, agreed by both teams and approved by the Competition Officer, is arranged. Any team wishing to rearrange a fixture must first consult their opponents, agree a proposed alternative date and submit the request to the Competition Officer for approval.

If teams cannot agree a new date within seven days of the original postponement, the Competition Officer will determine the rearranged fixture date. Failure to fulfil the fixture on the rearranged date may result in the fixture being deemed conceded in accordance with Rule 6.7.

- 6.2 Fixtures within the Regional Leagues (those outside of the Premier Division) are subject to greater flexibility. The League and participating teams will work together to maximise fixture completion.
- 6.3 Any team desiring to arrange a friendly must seek permission from the Competition Officer. No friendly fixtures shall be arranged on a League fixture date without prior approval of the Competition Officer.
- 6.4 Teams must accept fixtures given at seven days' notice by the Competition Officer.

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- 6.5 Any team failing to play a fixture on a scheduled date will be made to play the reverse fixture, if it has not already been played or forfeited, on their opponents' ground.
- 6.6 Any team failing to fulfil a fixture must pay reasonable expenses to the non-offending team, as determined by the RFL. This may include the referee's full fee and expenses.
- 6.7 A team shall be deemed to have conceded a fixture where it:
- i. fails to fulfil a scheduled fixture without the approval of the Competition Officer;
 - ii. withdraws from a fixture on the day it is due to be played without reasonable cause; or
 - iii. fails to fulfil a rearranged fixture on the date instructed by the Competition Officer.

A fixture deemed to have been conceded shall be determined in accordance with Rule 3.3.

A College may appeal a decision to deem a fixture conceded by submitting written representations to the RFL Education Department within 24 hours of notification of the decision. Appeals shall be considered by an independent panel whose decision shall be final.

7 MATCH DAY OPERATIONS

- 7.1 Unless otherwise specified by the Competition Officer, all fixtures shall be played on Wednesday afternoons with a scheduled kick-off time of 2.00pm. Where a College has notified the Competition Officer of its preferred home kick-off time or playing window (for example evening fixtures), this will be reflected in the draft fixture list where reasonably practicable.

Following publication of the fixtures, Colleges shall have seven days to raise any concerns regarding fixture dates or kick-off times. If no concern is raised within that period, the published fixture date and kick-off time shall be deemed to have been accepted by both Colleges and shall become the default arrangements for that fixture. Any subsequent changes shall require the agreement of both Colleges and the approval of the Competition Officer.

- 7.2 To maintain the continuity of the playing programme the Competition Officer shall be empowered, if necessary, to bring forward to an earlier date, fixtures scheduled for later in the season.

8 Team Sizes

- 8.1 A maximum of 17 players may be named for each side taking part in a fixture including league and cup fixtures, play-off games and finals. The maximum number of players can be increased to 20 subject to the agreement of the opposition. If agreement is not sought or permitted with opponents, then a maximum of 17 players may be named. For any fixture, this must be confirmed by Tuesday evening prior to the game with the appointed referee and Competition Officer.
- 8.2 Within the Regional Leagues (those outside of the Premier Division) there are no restrictions on team sizes, both maximum and minimum. Team sizes must be discussed and agreed

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between opposing teams in advance of the game. Teams are encouraged to be accommodating to ensure games take place wherever possible.

- 8.3 Clubs are encouraged (not required) to match team sizes with their opposition to increase the likelihood of games taking place. For example, if a team only travels with 10 players, the opposing team also starts with 10 players on the pitch. Team sizes should be discussed and agreed between opposing teams in advance of the game.
- 8.4 A maximum of 5 professional players can be involved in any match day squad unless mutually agreed by both sides. The Competition Officer should be made aware of any such agreements prior to the fixture taking place. Any agreement to increase the number beyond 5 should be agreed by 5.00pm on the Monday before the fixture at the latest.

9 Contacting Opponents and Kit Obligations

- 9.1 In accordance with the Operational Rules it is the responsibility of the home College, during the week preceding a game, to contact both its opponents and the relevant Match Officials regarding team colours and ground directions. For the Premier Division this should be done no later than the Friday preceding the Wednesday fixture. For all other divisions this should be done by no later than 5pm on the Monday preceding the Wednesday fixture. Away teams should acknowledge any correspondence received and confirm their intention to travel, no later than 24 hours before the scheduled kick-off time.
- 9.2 In the event there is a clash of colours the away team must wear an alternative strip.

10 Medical Requirements

- 10.1 The home team is required to ensure that a first aider attends each game. The first aider should make themselves known to the Match Official before the start of any Match and shall remain for a minimum of 15 minutes after the end of the Game and shall speak directly with a designated Official from both clubs, if necessary, to ensure that the correct reporting paperwork is completed. If there is no first aider, then the Match Official will not permit a game to take place.
- 10.2 First aiders should be listed on the team sheet and are required to register on the GameDay system as a volunteer.
- 10.3 In the event a player sustains an injury to the head or displays signs or symptoms of concussion, the Match Official will stop the game and ask for the first aider to attend to them. If the first aider suspects a concussion, the player **MUST** be removed from the field of play and remain off the field. If the player refuses to follow the first aider's advice, then the Match Officials can hold up play until the player follows the instructions of the first aider. Advice for managing a concussion can be found [HERE](#). The RFL is supportive of and follows the SRA concussion guidance – please read through the guidance in full [Concussion Guidelines](#) and ensure they are applied to matches and training at all times.
- 10.4 In the event there is a serious injury or concussion at a Match this must be reported. The relevant team must ensure the [serious injury form](#) is completed. It is imperative that any head injuries or serious injuries of any sort are reported as this information must be provided to the insurers.

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11 Team Sheet

- 11.1 Official team sheets must be completed correctly before the commencement of matches and shall be signed by a recognised official from each College and the Match Official.
- 11.2 Completed team sheets should include the full forename and surname (no initials), of all participants and must be sent by the home team to competitions@rfl.co.uk within 48 hours following the completion of the game. Details of the man of the match from both the participating teams must also be included.
- 11.3 It is the responsibility of both teams to ensure that the team sheet information is entered on the GameDay system within 48 hours following the completion of the game.
- 11.4 Professional players should be indicated on the team sheet by placing a 'P' next to the players' name.

12 Reporting Results

- 12.1 The home team, in consultation with the Match Official and designated officer from the opposition, must agree the result immediately on completion of the game and enter the result on GameDay within 24 hours.

13 Abandonment of Games

- 13.1 If a game is abandoned with more than three-quarters of the playing time elapsed, the result shall stand unless otherwise determined by the RFL. If less than three-quarters of the playing time has elapsed the RFL, at its sole discretion, may order a game to be re-played.

14 Grounds Unfit to Play

- 14.1 If the home club suspects that its ground may be unfit for play due to adverse weather or other causes, it must immediately contact a Match Official from the RFL-approved list to conduct a ground inspection.

If the Match Official deems the ground unfit for play and determines that it is unlikely to become playable before the scheduled kick-off, this decision must be communicated immediately to:

- The visiting club
- The appointed Match Official
- The Competition Officer

Failure to follow this procedure may result in the home club being found guilty of Misconduct. In addition to any sanctions, the home club will be responsible for reimbursing reasonable travel expenses incurred by any Match Official or club that was not notified in accordance with this rule.

- 14.2 This clause aligns with Operational Rule B2:4. Clubs must also refer to the RFL's Grass Pitch Inspection Form and guidance on hard ground protocols. A common-sense approach should

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be applied, prioritising player welfare and fixture fulfilment. Where appropriate, clubs are encouraged to consider alternative venues (e.g., local schools or parks).

- 14.3 In the case of both a no-fault or mutually agreed postponement, if teams cannot agree a new date within 7 days of the original postponement, then the Competition Officer will issue a new date for the fixture.

15 DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSIONS AND FINES

- 15.1 All disciplinary matters, suspensions, fines and appeals shall be dealt with in accordance with Section D of the RFL Operational Rules and the F9 On Field Sentencing Guidelines.

16 APPEALS

- 16.1 Appeals against disciplinary sanctions shall be conducted under Section D of the RFL Operational Rules, with reference to the F9 On Field Sentencing Guidelines where applicable.