

IRFU POLICY: DATE OF ELIGIBILITY CHANGES FROM BEGINNING OF 2009/10 SEASON

The focus of the IRFU Strategic Plan (2008 to 2012) is to create a quality game across all levels aligned with the IRFU Long Term Player Development Pathway (LTPD). A quality game will increase the transition of players from Youth and School Rugby into the Adult Game and after consultation with the Irish Rugby stakeholders the following policy will be implemented from the start of the 2009/10 season across both Men's and Women's Rugby.

Date of Eligibility

From September 2009, the IRFU will implement the International Rugby Board (IRB) date of eligibility, which is defined as the age of any player on the 1st of January of that season (in 2009/10 an U15 player will be defined as a player "Under 15 years of age on the 1st January 2010") viz. born in 1995 or later.

After consultation with the relevant Branch and Union stakeholders regarding the most appropriate age bands, to maximise transition of players through youth and schools rugby to the adult game, the following age categories has been agreed:

Leprechaun Rugby	7s
Mini Rugby	8s, 9s, 10s, 11s and 12s
Youth Rugby	13s, 15s, 17s and 19s (<i>Branches have the ability to operate intermediate ages at 14s, 16s and 18s if there is appropriate numbers</i>)
Schools	13's, 14s, 15s, 16s and/or 17s, and 19s

Table to clarify year of birth for age categories:			
Category	Season: 2009/2010	Season: 2010/2011	Season: 2011/2012
7	Born in 2003	Born in 2004	Born in 2005
8	2002	2003	2004
9	2001	2002	2003
10	2000	2001	2002
11	1999	2000	2001
12	1998	1999	2000
13	1997	1998	1999
14	1996	1997	1998
15	1995	1996	1997
16	1994	1995	1996
17	1993	1994	1995
18	1992	1993	1994
19	1991	1992	1993

Leprechaun and Mini Rugby

In line with the IRFU LTPD pathway, Leprechaun and mini rugby should encourage skill development, participation and enjoyment; therefore, the IRFU policy is that clubs and teams do not engage in leagues or cups emphasising results. Clubs should only participate in blitzes and or club days which are operated according to the IRFU National Mini Blitz framework, which allows for the ethos as set out in the above paragraph, and this policy will be enforced by the IRFU from the commencement of the 2009/10 season.

Competitions

Branches will be responsible for arranging competitions at 13s/ 15s/ 17s and 19s level and the current All Ireland U16 & U18 Club Competition will be replaced by a National 17s and 19s Club Competition from September 2009. Branches will have the flexibility to determine the appropriate competition structures to support the numbers of players at each of the age categories as well as the development of the Adult game at age bands above 19s.

Schools

Branches will be responsible for administrating schools competitions in line with the IRFU policy as follows:

1. Schools Senior Cup will become a U19 (1st January) Cup, Branches to decide in exceptional circumstances whether players repeating their Leaving Certificate should be ineligible.
2. Branches will have the discretion to implement regulations at the pre-U16 Cup level to maximise the development and participation of players.

Player Development and Representative Rugby

- 16s Development squads
- 17s Development squads
- 18s Development sessions/ Squads and Representative matches
- 19s Development sessions/ Squads and representative matches

Provincial and international matches will take place at 18s (Inter-provincials and internationals/ tournaments) and 19s (Inter-provincial and Internationals) level as per the current arrangement.

Transition from schools/ youth to adult club game

This is the area where there is an unacceptable level of drop out and the future of the adult club game depends on a successful transition from underage rugby into adult club rugby. At the present moment a number of Branches run U20 competitions with an U20 IRFU National Competition. However with the change in the eligibility date it will be up to the Branches to determine whether an 'age band' (in line with 1st Jan) in adult rugby will assist the increase with the transition of players into Adult Game. A national competition at 20s or 21s level could take place should the majority of Branches elect to run a league competition.

Competition Structures/ Regulations and Development for Clubs				
LTPD Stage	Age Category	Regulations	Competition Structure	Player Development
1	7s	Non-contact rugby	<i>Friendlies / Club Days & Blitzes</i>	
	8 & 9s	8-a-side		
	10s, & 11s	10-a-side		
2	12s	15-a-side	<i>Leagues & Cups</i>	<i>Area Clinics at end of the U16 season</i>
	13s & 15s			
3	16s	No lift in line out U19 scrum	<i>Leagues/ Cups & All Ireland</i>	<i>Development Squads</i>
	17s	Lifting in the line out & U19 scrum No collapsing of maul		
4	18s & 19s	15-a-side Lifting in the line out; U19 scrum No collapsing of maul	<i>Leagues/ Cups & All Ireland</i>	<i>Development Sessions & Squads & Rep Rugby</i>

Competition Structures/ Regulations and Development for Schools:				
LTPD Stage	Age Category	Regulations	Competition Structure	Player Development
2	13, 14 & 15s	15-a-side No lift in line out; U19 scrum	<i>Friendly fixtures & 15s Cup in Ulster</i>	
3	16 & 17s	15-a-side Lifting in the line out; U19 scrum No collapsing of maul	<i>Leagues & Junior Cup in Connacht/ Leinster & Munster</i>	<i>Development Squads</i>
4	18 & 19s	15-a-side Lifting in the line out; U19 scrum No collapsing of maul	<i>Leagues & Senior Cup</i>	<i>Development Sessions & Squads & Rep Rugby</i>